Loving Gaṇeśa

Hinduism's Endearing Elephant-Faced God

प्रेमवान् गणेशः
सनातनधर्मवल्लभो
गजाननमहादेवः प्र

sanaatanaDama*vallaBaae
gajaananamahadeva:

Third Edition, 2019

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by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami

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Art Descriptions
Cover Art: Artist S. Rajam takes us inside a South Indian temple where devotees are seeking the grace of Lord Ganesha. Some bring offerings, others prostrate or offer prayerful praise and holy mantras to their Lord.

Half Title Page: A. Manivel paints Lord Ganesha with His brother Murugan.

Front and Bank Endsheets by S. Rajam

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Satguru Sivaya
Subramuniyaswami

Samarpaṇam

समर्पणम्

Dedication

IT WAS NOT SO LONG AGO THAT SEEKERS REQUESTED THAT WE PUBLISH MORE ABOUT this mystical God, most beloved of them all. So we did. Now, into your hands we present a lovable Loving Gaṇeśa. Why did we choose that name of all names? Because everyone, young and old, thin and hefty (especially the latter) loves Gaṇeśa. Of course, He loves us all very, very much. He is the God of unfailing laws, such as gravity, retribution and karmic responses. In matters of less gravity, He is the lover of all things sweet. He is also the Prince of Culture and Patron of the Arts. Everyone loves music, art, drama and the dance. He, in His joyous ponderousness, is the Remover of Obstacles, and that is just what He did for us—removed the obstacles we faced in publishing *Loving Gaṇeśa*, and in producing this third edition, and those you faced in finding it. Many months of research and effort went into this gem. Help was given by maṭhadīpatis, āchāryas, swāmīs, pandits, "Gaṇeśologists," Sanskrit scholars, brahmachārīs, brahmachāriṇīs, housewives, husbands and children, experts in all fields of knowledge about Hinduism's elephant-faced Lord, to be worshiped first before starting any quest. This book is lovingly dedicated to my satguru, the venerable sage of Sri Lanka, Satguru Yogaswami, whose ashram in Colombuthurai rested across the road from the Varasitthi Vinayagar Temple in the northern Tamil domain. May Loving Gaṇeśa bring to you a deeper, subtler appreciation of Hinduism—the venerable Sanātana Dharma.

Indra Sharma captures the powerful grace of Satguru Siva Yogaswami of Jaffna, Sri Lanka (1872-1964). *He is proudly bearing the three lines of holy ash that every Śaivite honors and a simple, hand-woven cloth which he always wore.*

Sūchipattra

सूचिपत्र

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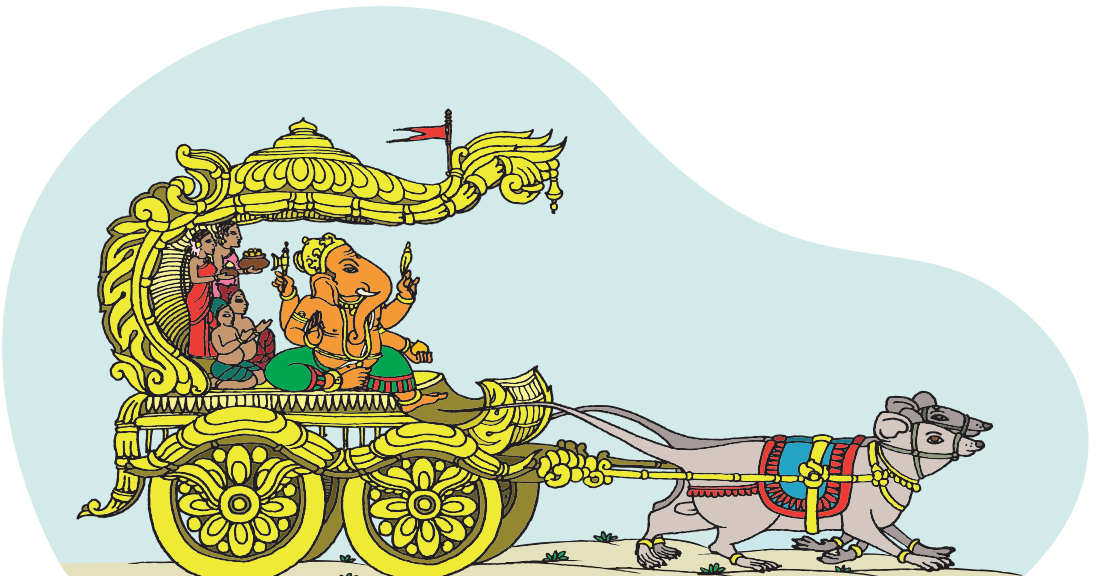

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Prologue

Pūrvaraṅga

पूर्वरङ्गः

In our internet age there is an abundance of information available on the web on the Deity Lord Gaṇeśa. A search on Google for "Gaṇeśa" produces 169 million results. As an example, the Wikipedia article on Him begins with: "Gaṇeśa, also known as Gaṇapati, Vinayaka or by numerous other names, is one of the best-known and most worshipped deities in the Hindu pantheon. His image is found throughout India, Sri Lanka, Fiji, Thailand, Bali (Indonesia), Bangladesh and Nepal. Hindu denominations worship him regardless of affiliations. Devotion to Gaṇeśa is widely diffused and extends to Jains and Buddhists."

With so much information available, what then is the unique position of my guru's book *Loving Gaṇeśa* in this sea of information? Google "Ganesha as a real being," and the answer is self-evident: 225 references are given and they are nearly all quotes from this book. Though it is a central truth among most Hindus, the idea of Gaṇeśa as a real being is seldom found in written form, and nowhere so boldly. Thus, from a contemporary publishing perspective, this insight is unique to this book and Gurudeva's other writings. Gurudeva presents this idea in his introduction: "In modern times in the Kali Yuga (which commenced about the time mothers began relinquishing their stri dharma and, Gaṇeśa admonishes, it is the pure mothers of the world who will herald the next Sat Yuga), there are a great many liberal Hindus and/or Western-influenced Hindus who don't think of Gaṇeśa as a real being. To them He is a symbol, a superstition, a way of explaining philosophy to children and the uneducated. But this has not been my experience of our loving Lord. I have seen Him with my own eye. He has come to me in visions several times and convinced my lower mind of His reality. The living, loving reality of our benevolent God is the premise of the book that you hold in your hands. Believe it, for it is true." After introducing this key idea, Gurudeva extends it further in explaining that you, the reader, can also contact Lord Gaṇeśa through your prayers. He then gives specific step-by-step suggestions for doing so.

In the introduction and in chapter seven, Gurudeva shares his unique approach to the chakras—the nerve plexuses or centers of force and consciousness located within the inner bodies of man. The seven principal chakras can be seen psychically as colorful, multi-petaled wheels or lotuses. They are situated along the spinal cord from the base to the cranial chamber. Additionally,

seven chakras exist below the spine. They are seats of instinctive consciousness. In presenting the chakras, the common approach is to focus on experiencing the higher chakras: in the throat, divine love, and in the head, divine sight and illumination. Gurudeva, however, starts by focusing on closing off the lower seven chakras and shows us how the worship of Lord Gaṇeśa can help us accomplish this. Through His worship, we can rise above fear and lust, raging anger, retaliatory jealousy, prolonged mental confusion, selfishness, absence of conscience and (in the lowest chakra) murder and malice.

A third unique contribution from Gurudeva is the concept of Gaṇeśa's five powers, or shaktis, which are presented in chapter three. In this system, each power is built upon being successful in living the previous one. These powers constitute five progressive focuses that are the basis for manifesting the fullness of religion within the family:

1. love and harmony within the family
2. feelings of amity extended to relatives, neigh_bors and friends
3. this same love extended to all persons one has dealings with in the external world: business associates, a casual merchant and the public at large
4. the love of culture and all that it brings, religious formalities and the respect and appreciation of discipline
5. the wonderful feelings obtained by the outpouring of love of this God

I trust you will enjoy reading Gurudeva's unique contribution to the vast lore on Lord Gaṇeśa.

Love and blessings to you from this and inner worlds,

163rd Jagadāchārya of the Nandinātha
Sampradāya's Kailāsa Paramparā
Guru Mahāsannidhānam
Kauai Aadheenam, Hawaii, USA

Author's Introduction

Granthakāra Bhūmikā

ग्रन्थकारभूमिका

LORD GAṆEŚA HAS BEEN PRAYED TO, WORSHIPED AND ADORED IN ONE FORM OR another since time began; and time itself began with His creation. He, above all others, is the God, the great Mahādeva, to be invoked before every act and especially worshiped and prayed to when changes occur in our lives as we move from the old established patterns into new ones. Lord Gaṇeśa is always there to steady our minds and open the proper doors as we evolve and progress. He never, ever fails. He is always there for us when we need Him.

Hindus around the world pray to Gaṇeśa for help and guidance as He leads us out of an agricultural age through the technological and information eras and on into the new age of space. Many are still on the farms; others are in the offices and in the factories; while still others land on the moon and orbit through space. With a mind more intricate than the most complicated computers in the world all hooked together, but as simple as an on-and-off switch, Gaṇeśa knows all aspects of these transitions, in unfailing continuity, from one era to another. He is totally aware, at every point in time, of the mother in her home, the farmer in his field, the astronaut orbiting this planet, the corporate worker at his desk and the factory technician performing his tasks.

For thousands of years in the villages of Vedic India, Lord Gaṇeśa has been, and is today in towns and cities in many countries, a powerful and immediate presence in everyone's lives. He was and is the one prayed to when starting a business or an enterprise of any kind. Today factory workers approach a small shrine dedicated to Him before commencing their daily work, so that nothing might go wrong. Businessmen beg His help in adjusting the stock market to their advantage, and farmers, of course, chant His 108 names while planting their seeds, rice, other crops, or trees. When no rain comes, images of our loving Lord are seen throughout Bharat land submerged in water up to His neck, so that His great mind may become impressed with the people's crying needs. When grandma is sick or the crops are not coming in on time, when the children are growing up wrongly by adopting alien ways, Hindus diligently pray to our loving God for help in restructuring their lives. He is the supreme Lord of Dharma, and we pray to Him for guidance in the direction of our lives.

In fact, in my early years of experience in Sri Lanka in the late 1940s, and in recent years as well, Śaivite pandits explained that they consider Lord Gaṇeśa

with all their hearts to be the one Supreme Deity, because it is through their worship of Him that they reach the holy feet of our Supreme God Śiva, thus avoiding His Rudra aspect. They explain, in their wisdom, that they begin their worship by entering Gaṇeśa's great, benevolent Being of ever-pervasive love, and then through Him, the Son, they safely reach the Father.

However, in modern times in the Kali Yuga (which commenced about the time mothers began relinquishing their *strī* dharma and, Gaṇeśa admonishes, it is the pure mothers of the world who will herald the next Sat Yuga), there are a great many liberal Hindus and/or Western-influenced Hindus who don't think of Gaṇeśa as a real being. To them He is a symbol, a superstition, a way of explaining philosophy to children and the uneducated. But this has not been my experience of our loving Lord. I have seen Him with my own eye. He has come to me in visions several times and convinced my lower mind of His reality. The living, loving reality of our benevolent God is the premise of the book that you hold in your hand. Believe it, for it is true.

Worship of Lord Gaṇeśa is immediate. One has but to think of His form to contact His ever-present mind. Close your eyes for a second, visualize His large elephant head and experience the direct communication that has immediately begun. This is similar to punching in a code at a personal computer terminal which gives immediate access to the entire network of computers, large and small. On this remarkable and universal Innernet, obscure and necessary information and answers to every question are now available as needed through the direct link with Lord Gaṇeśa. Wherever we are, whatever we are doing, we can use the computer terminal of our own brain and code in the divine image of Lord Gaṇeśa and gain complete access to His vast computer-like mind. Gaṇeśa's mind has been programmed by the history of experience over eons of time and naturally encompasses the intricacies of the universe and the cycles of life in all their ramifications and simplicities. Our great God Gaṇeśa sits contentedly upon the *mūlādhāra* chakra. This chakra controls the forces of memory within every creature. Worship of Him strengthens your memory, builds character and brings knowledge from the within. It also protects you from the lower forces which reside in the little-known chakras below the *mūlādhāra*. These darker chakras govern fear, anger, jealousy and the confused thinking centered around self-preservation.

The first chakra below the *mūlādhāra* governs the state of mind of fear and lust. The chakra below that governs raging anger, which comes from despair or from threats to one's self-will and can make people angry even with God. The third chakra below the *mūlādhāra* governs retaliatory jealousy, pride and

arrogance, which are associated with feelings of inadequacy, inferiority and helplessness. At this level the only safe *sādhana* is *seva,* karma yoga, service selflessly—a discipline that, when done well, results in a change of character. People who live in the consciousness of this chakra often deny the existence of God and are contentiously combative with one another. The fourth chakra down governs prolonged confusion and instinctive willfulness, the desire to get rather than to give. Those in this region of mind celebrate the primacy of materialistic advancement over everything else. Hatred arises here as unwholesome *vāsanās* build one upon another. The fifth chakra below the *mūlādhāra* is the home of the instinctive mind's cruel selfishness. People in the consciousness of this chakra are capable of actions without conscience. They see to their own well-being at all costs and think only of "I, me and mine." The sixth chakra down is the realm of absence of conscience, which brings about theft, fraud and other dishonest dealings. People in this state of mind believe the world owes them a living and they can simply take whatever they please from whomever they please. The seventh and last chakra below the *mūlādhāra* governs malice, also without conscience, expressed through revenge, torture for the joy of it, murder for the sake of murder, the destruction of others' property, mind, emotion or physical body. Hatred abides here. Reason seldom reaches those who live in this state of mind.

Men and women of wisdom will work diligently to close off these lower chakras and the negative karmas they can unleash. By worship of Lord Gaṇeśa, seated upon the *mūlādhāra* chakra, you can slowly seal off these lower states of mind and keep awareness lifted above the animal instincts.

Wherever His devotees are—in the home, the factories, the offices, the hospitals, the marketplace, orbiting in space or tilling the soil on the farm—Lord Gaṇeśa is ever there. Intimate access is acquired by simply loving Gaṇeśa and holding His robust image in your mind. Carefully visualize the large head and ears, His long trunk, massive body, big belly and the objects He holds in His many hands. Look into Gaṇeśa's eyes. Train yourself to see Him within your own mind with your eyes closed. This is the key. Hold His form steady in your mind through the power of visualization. Now you can talk to Him. Pronounce the words mentally into His ear. He is listening, though He may never speak back but take into His vast mind your prayer and slowly work it out. You must simply speak all of your questions and your problems into His right ear. When you are finished, open your eyes. Go on with your day and go on with your life. Wherever you are, remember this simple way of making contact with Lord Gaṇeśa and, as a good seeker, exercise this psychic power, this *siddhi.*

Starting today and in the days to come, you will notice how He answers questions and solves problems for you through the course of your daily life. You will notice how He influences events and decisions slowly and subtly, in unseen ways. Situations will change for you, unexpected doors will open, and accustomed ones will close as you are propelled through His grace toward your inevitable glorious future. Read and reread the above formula for immediate access to Lord Gaṇeśa until it is firmly implanted in your subconscious memory patterns, and then begin to make contact with Him often through each day wherever you are and whatever you are doing. Yes! Lord Gaṇeśa is immediate, and you have immediate access to Him. Wherever you are, remember this and as a seeker on the path through life's experiences exercise this *siddhi*. It is your right to do so.

All the major religions of the world, including Hinduism, have established institutions and societies to research, remodel and remold their spiritual community to be of service to their people in the fast-moving technological age. In almost every country, the various sects of Hinduism have now created temples and institutions to bring their members closer to their religion, to make it applicable to their daily modern life. Hindus have realized that those who left the farms and village guilds, the paddy fields and orchards are moving into the factories and the offices as their countries industrialize. Therefore, every effort is being made by hundreds of thousands of Hindu religious leaders to remodel and remold the presentation of our great faith to compensate during this renaissance, to establish a new era, to circumference, master and reform the ailing people of the world. Every effort is being made to make Hinduism as

vital and practical in this era as it has been in more rustic times, to bring back the truant members to our religion, and to vivify the Gods, for so many have put them into exile.

There is an unfortunate and totally erroneous assumption that the Gods are needed less as man pioneers new fields of science and technology and the ever-expanding field of knowledge, which is nothing other than other people's opinions and is constantly changing. Every true Hindu knows that our Gods are the essence of knowledge. They are helping us to bring through more sophisticated insights, blending scientific inquiry with spiritual intuition. They are constantly assisting us in the wise use of that knowledge for the benefit of mankind. We must teach the world's youth of the greatness of Hinduism, the ancient Sanātana Dharma. We must put forth our message to all who are ready to listen. Let them accept or reject and turn us away. It is our duty to pass on our knowledge to the generation that follows us, even if there is only a thirty-day difference in our ages. It is our *varṇāśrama* dharma to speak to those who are younger than we, to pass on all we know to those who don't know, for no one knows the exact moment of his or her great departure. So, let us dispatch our duty while we have the opportunity.

Yes, we must teach the world's Hindu youth the greatness of their Hinduism. We must teach them that they need not leave their ancestral faith to enter into science, politics or any kind of intellectual pursuit. We must teach them to seek the able assistance of Lord Gaṇeśa in all things. He is the first Ishṭa Devatā, the chosen God, of all Hindus, regardless of their sectarian position. Worship of Lord Gaṇeśa leads the devotee most naturally to the other great Gods.

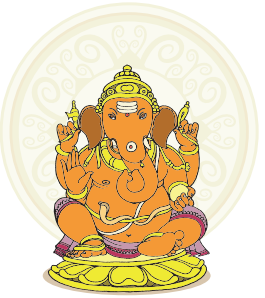
Love and blessings to you from this and inner worlds,

Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami
162nd Jagadāchārya of the Nandinātha Sampradāya's Kailāsa Paramparā
Guru Mahāsannidhānam, Kauai Aadheenam, Hawaii, USA
Gaṇeśa Chaturthī, September 13, 1999
Hindu year 5101, national commemoration day
for the Panchamukha Ganapati Pavilion at the
Spiritual Park in Mauritius, Indian Ocean

Preface: A Milk Miracle

Prastāvanā Kshīra Chamatkāra

प्रस्तावना क्षीर चमत्कार



On September 21, 1995, just days after I had completed the final editing of *Loving Gaṇeśa,* something quite wonderful happened. Lord Gaṇeśa began sipping milk, first in India, then in nearly every country where Hindus reside, as devotees rushed to temples and shrines to offer milk to the elephant-faced God. It was a great spiritual experience for us in Hawaii, where we publish the international news journal, HINDUISM TODAY, to receive the many phone calls and fax messages with positive, uplifting testimony as to His drinking milk in so many places. As perhaps the most fitting preface to this benevolent Lord's book, we are pleased to present the story of the milk miracle—*kshīra chamatkāra*—from HINDUISM TODAY, November, 1995.

IT ALL BEGAN ON SEPTEMBER 21 WHEN AN OTHERWISE ORDINARY MAN IN NEW Delhi dreamt that Gaṇeśa, the elephant-headed God of Wisdom, craved a little milk. Upon awakening, he rushed in the dark before dawn to the nearest temple, where a skeptical priest allowed him to proffer a spoonful of milk to the small stone image. Both watched in astonishment as it disappeared, magically consumed by the God. What followed is unprecedented in modern Hindu history. Within hours, news spread like a brush fire across India that Gaṇeśa was accepting milk offerings. Tens of millions of people of all ages flocked to the temples. The unworldly happening brought worldly New Delhi to a standstill, and its vast stocks of milk, more than a million liters, sold out within hours. Just as suddenly as it started in India, it stopped, in just 24 hours.

But it was just beginning elsewhere, as Hindus in India called their relatives in other parts of the world. Soon our HINDUISM TODAY offices were flooded with reports from around the world. Everywhere the story was the same. A teaspoonful of milk offered by touching it to Gaṇeśa's trunk, tusk or mouth would disappear in a few seconds to a few minutes—not always, but with unprecedented frequency. Reuters news service quoted Anila Premji, "I held the spoon out level, and it just disappeared. To me it was just a miracle. It gave me a sense of feeling that there is

a God, a sense of Spirit on this Earth." Not only Gaṇeśa, but Śiva, Pārvatī, Nandi and the Nāga, Śiva's snake, all took milk.

This "milk miracle" may go down in history as the most important event shared by Hindus this century, if not in the last millennium. It has brought about an instantaneous religious revival among nearly one billion people. No other religion has ever done that before! It is as if every Hindu who had, say, "ten pounds of devotion," suddenly has twenty.

Miracles witnessed by many people happen from time to time in Hinduism, as in other faiths, but they are rare. As a young boy, the tenth-century saint Nambi Anbar Nambi inspired Lord Gaṇeśa to actually eat the offerings placed before Him. Saint Jnanesvara of Maharashtra became famous 600 years ago for having a water buffalo recite the *Vedas* before a group of arrogant priests.

Naturally there are skeptics—10 percent of Hindus, according to our very unscientific poll—all of whom moved swiftly to distance themselves from the phenomenon. "Capillary action," coupled with "mass hysteria," is the correct explanation, concluded many scientists within a few hours. Aparna Chattopadhyay of New Delhi replied to these scoffers in a letter to the *Hindustan Times:* "I am a senior scientist of the Indian Agriculture Research Institute, New Delhi. I found my offerings of milk in a temple being mysteriously drunk by the Deities. How can the scientists explain the copper snake absorbing the milk I offered with a spoon kept at a good distance away from it?" Scientific or not, gallons of milk were disappearing with hardly a trace. A leading barrister in Malaysia was dumbfounded when he watched a metal Gaṇeśa attached to an automobile dashboard absorb six teaspoons of milk. In Nepal, King Birendra himself made offerings to the God. Deities in Kenya and other countries took gallons of milk while sitting in shallow metal trays with no drains.

The worldwide press coverage has been nearly as amazing as the miracle itself. Of course, the event dominated the news in India for days. But once it started outside India, local and leading national papers, such as the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* in America, and the *Financial Times* in UK, picked up the story. The international wire services Reuters and Associated Press carried a dozen articles a day on what had now been named the "Milk Miracle." Many in India are unaware of how warmly the Western press embraced the miracle. In many countries reporters came to the temples and personally offered milk. Of course, they too would put forward a "scientific explanation" in their report, but many otherwise detached Western journalists shared their own joyful experience as a fact.

Ironically, the reporting inside India was a completely different matter. The English-language press in India, with its Marxist-leaning political bias, has never been a friend of Hinduism. Headlines heralded the attitude: "People go Berserk at 'Milk Miracle;'" "Scientists Dismiss it as Mass Hysteria," and "Milk-Drinking Deities Unleash Mass Hysteria, Scientists Ridicule Miracle Theory." Not every Indian paper was so negative: Tunku Varadarajan of *The Times* expressed his concern that "Modern Hindus are often all too apologetic about the apparent angularities in the beliefs of their countrymen. In this, secular Indians are in danger of denying the very logic which has allowed India to be secular in the first place. If that tolerance is now under strain, the blame lies in part with those who would regard as dangers any celebrations of the country's underlying Hindu identity."

Hinduism has its own science to apply to this miracle, that of the interpretation of *portents*—unusual or supernatural events. Portents are the specific domain of astrologers to interpret. The "milk miracle," under this analysis, is not the end in itself, but rather signals a future event of great import. Sri K.N. Rao, one of India's most noted astrologers, explained that the involvement of Gaṇeśa means that harm will come to the "commanders of armies." The acceptance of milk, however, is an auspicious sign. Therefore, the final result will be a greater good. The portent will take effect in eight months, just about the time of an eclipse in April, 1996.

H.H. Sri Tiruchi Mahaswamigal of Bangalore said incidents of Deities accepting offerings occur every 100 years, usually eight or nine days after Gaṇeśa Chaturthī. Swamiji believes it is a very good omen, as do other swāmīs, astrologers and pandits we have contacted.

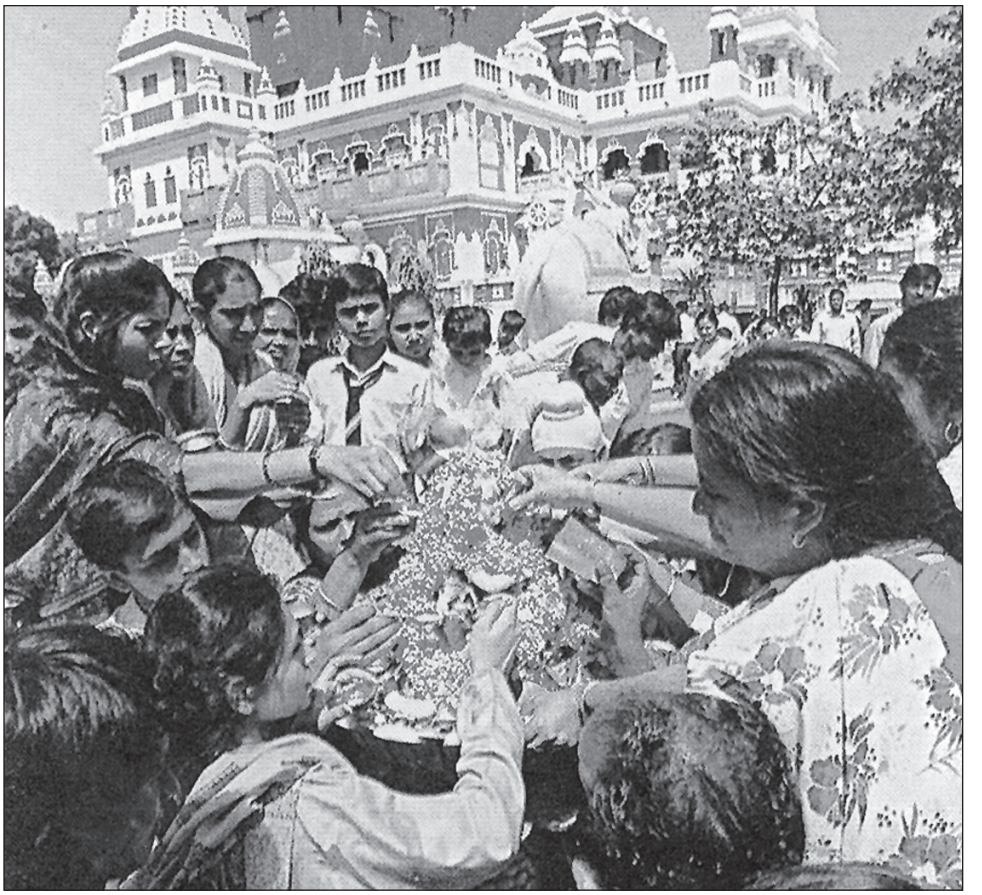
Testimony of the Milk Miracle Worldwide

INDIA: It was around 7:30am that my father came back from his morning walk and told me, "Rajiv, go to the temple. A great miracle is taking place. Lord Gaṇeśa is having milk. This is happening all over Delhi." I and my wife rushed to the Deepali temple which is next to our house. There were hundreds in a long queue waiting to offer milk. Inside the eight-by-ten-foot sanctum a dozen people at a time were offering milk in spoons to the small Gaṇeśa. My wife offered milk twice. I could clearly see the milk disappearing in a few seconds. Many temple priests said they had dreams of Gaṇeśa asking for milk, which they then offered in the early morning. The Deepali temple priest told me, "Somebody came and knocked on my door at 4:30 in the morning. He called, 'Gaṇeśa is having milk! Gaṇeśa is having milk!' The man was gone when I answered the door." Life in Delhi was almost at a standstill. The markets were deserted. Banks and official institutions had very thin attendance. In the last few days I have spoken to about 100 people. Ninety percent of them told me that they had experienced it, and the milk had really been accepted by the Deity.

Rajiv Malik, New Delhi, Journalist

NEW YORK: Even in cynical, hard-edged New York the miracle was happening. The milk was actually disappearing. Manisha Lund, a young college student, went to the Hindu temple in Queens and says it was a virtual stampede. When she offered milk to Lord Gaṇeśa, "It was sucked up like someone was drinking it with a straw." Gaṇeśa seemed to be in a whimsical mood: sometimes He refused the spoonfuls offered by devotees and slurped up that given by nonbelievers. At the Hindu temple in Flushing, a young African-American woman who is not a Hindu but loves Hindu philosophy wondered aloud whether Śiva would accept her offering. She extended her spoon and before the eyes of many worshipers, the milk disappeared into Śiva's mouth. Tales of faith and joy were repeated in many homes and offices where devotees offered milk to idols of stone, brass and silver. Young people seemed to have better luck, and delighted in the miracle: Pummy Singh, 14, called Indra, her mother, at work and gave her the exciting news: Gaṇeśa had taken the milk three times from her and her friends. Such was the frenzy that it was hard to gain entrance into the crowded temples, even at 2:00 in the morning.

Lavina Melwani, New York, Journalist



Associated Press published this photo worldwide of Hindus in Delhi gathered around a statue of Gaṇeśa to offer milk outside the Birla temple.

LOS ANGELES: "One of the devotees received a phone call from India about the miracle," recalls Bharat Shastri, priest of the Hindu temple in Norwalk. By evening he had received 600 phone calls. There was a general air of skepticism here and at other temples in Los Angeles. Only a few devotees had their milk offerings taken by Gaṇeśa at Norwalk. Nothing extraordinary happened at the Śrī Venkateshwara Temple in Calabasas, where milk was offered only by the priests. At the Chatsworth temple, the miracle seemed to have happened big time. "On Thursday morning, temple president Dinesh Lakhanpal offered milk. It disappeared. Then I offered more, and that, too, disappeared," said Ravi Sharan, vice president of the temple. CNN and local TV channels came and the miracle reportedly happened for them. "One reporter, Sharon Tae of Channel 5, was so excited she hugged me with tears in her eyes," said Sharan.

Archana Dongre, Los Angeles, Journalist

CANADA: The phenomenon began following the 7:30pm pūjā Friday and continued unabated until about 11:45pm Sunday, the 24th, at the Edmonton Gaṇeśa Temple. The atmosphere around the Gaṇeśa *mūrti* was scintillating. Devotees approached, bowed and offered their prayers and a spoonful of milk. They ran the gamut from sari-clad pious elderly ladies supported on either side to gum-chewing teens in black leather jackets. I simply can't explain what happened to the milk. It would visibly "wick" up from the spoon to the surface of the stone of the trunk. Spoonful after spoonful was absorbed, sometimes as quickly as one could count to three, usually in 20 seconds. At the conservative rate of two teaspoons per minute for 51.5 hours (milk was offered continuously), some 7.7 gallons of milk were taken up. I could see no significant amount of milk around the Gaṇeśa *mūrti.* Of course, with the number of devotees and dripping spoons, Gaṇeśa's garments became wet on the same side as his trunk, but this didn't begin to account for the volume of milk offered. I was forced to conclude that we were all witnessing something that we could not logically explain. *Aran Veylan, Edmonton, Barrister*

MAURITIUS: Today, September 25th, I've given milk to Gaṇeśa. It is happening at Tulsi Sham Temple in Beau Bassin. I rushed there, leaving all my jobs behind. I took some milk and brought it close to the trunk without spilling any. The milk was absorbed very quickly. This is something great which is happening all around the world and making us better and better Hindus.

Parmesh Pallanee, Petite Rivière, Computer Systems Advisor

KENYA: It all started with a phone call from India to a relative in Nairobi that Lord Gaṇapati's marble statue was drinking milk. Pandit Narinder Kumar Sastri, head priest of Shree Sanatan Dharma Temple, recounts the experience with great emotion. According to him, an unlimited amount of milk was consumed by the two Deities in the temple. People from different religions and nationalities came and made the offering. Many nonbelievers came to test. When the offering was accepted, it changed people's thinking. The miracle had a special effect on the younger generation. Panditji believes a new generation of staunch Hindus has been born as a result. lt is extraordinary that the miracle occurred even on African soil, and it is equally remarkable that many African non-Hindus visited the temple and have become devotees. I stood inside the temple door for three hours and saw crowds coming and going. The atmosphere was charged and volatile, but peaceful. The people were mesmerized and were not prepared to leave the hall even after having made the offering.

In the private temple of Jyotin Arvind Bhai Patel in Nairobi, the miracle began at 4:30pm on Thursday and continued till 9:30am on Sunday. He and Minal tried with a spoonful of milk, which disappeared. The spoon was kept under the trunk of Śrī Gaṇeśa and the milk was sucked up. Minal recalls hearing the sucking sound. In four days, 15,000 people belonging to all castes and nationalities—Hindus, Sikhs, Africans and Europeans—made offerings. As the result of the personal experience of one non-Hindu, the Patels have been offered free land to build a Śiva temple in a shopping complex.

Prabha Prabhakar Bhardwaj

This devotee is one of thousands to offer milk to Lord Gaṇeśa at a temple. Unlike in India, the phenomenon continued in the rest of the world for several days.

My Luckiest Day

By Colonel P. C. Bhardwaj

It has taken many, many births for millions of us to witness and participate in such a miracle. I was one of the many lucky ones whom God gave the opportunity to feed Him. This miracle was needed to instill faith in people that the temple images do have powers, and to worship them is one path to reach Him. I am an engineer of long standing. The theory that capillary action

caused the suction of hundreds of pints of milk by Deities of stone and metal as small as twelve by six inches is not possible. Most of the Deities are carved of solid stone or cast of metal. Lord Gaṇeśa's trunk takes a bend and makes a twist at the tip. Its tip only has a small hole; the rest is solid mass. This tip is not capable of holding even one spoon of milk. In some of the *mūrtis*, the trunk falls straight and the tip does not have a hole. It sucked hundred of pints of milk in a few hours. No milk was seen flowing out of the body, and no mist was formed around the *mūrtis*. What shall we call it, other than Godly miracle?

We Are So Close to God

By Jay Dubashi, a columnist for New Delhi's
Organiser, the publication in which this article first appeared

It was a small boy who first alerted me as to what was happening. "Come, come," he said, "Gaṇeś-jī is drinking milk." We went to the nearby temple together, he and I, and the crowd was thick. A small girl, not more than three or four, was raising a spoon to the lips of Gaṇeś-jī, and as we watched in awe the milk disappeared. "What did I tell you?" said the small boy. There was nothing to argue. A miracle is a miracle. Even if it was not a miracle, it is still a miracle in the eyes of those who see it. There are too many things in this world which cannot be explained by the simple theories of physics or chemistry, for the theories themselves are changing with the times.

But it is not milk that interests me. The miracle was seen not just in India, but almost all over the world, wherever Hindus congregate. And it did not take days, not even hours, probably a few minutes to spread. It shows how close the Hindu community is when it comes to things that affect its identity, even closer than the Internet. There were throngs of Hindus in temples in London and Leicester, New Jersey and Chicago, Denmark, Canada, Bangkok and Singapore. And the whole thing was breathtakingly spontaneous.

It also revealed how close Hindus are, not only to each other but also to their Gods. This is something nobody but a Hindu understands. To us, the Gods are not external to us, but very much a part of our being. The relationship is affectionate and intimate, as between members of a family. There is nothing in the world as close-knit as a Hindu family, and the Gods are as much a part of this family as anyone else.

When I grew up as a boy in Goa, we had, of course, temples and *maṭhas,* but what we liked best was the time when Gaṇeś-jī came home for the Gaṇeśa

Visarjana festival. We used to have made a serious-looking idol as befits a family of teachers and officials, but somehow we never thought of Gaṇeś-jī as a serious person. How can anybody be serious if He chooses a small mouse to carry His plump weight? But we never asked such questions. It was enough that He was in our house for a few days, and we treated Him like a king. He wore the finest silks and ate the finest food. He was bathed in enough milk and honey to wash a grown elephant and his family. We kept Him in the house only for a day or so, and then it was time to take Him to the river for immersion. That was the hardest time for all of us, particularly for my uncle, whose job it was to prepare Him for immersion. We children went to the river, shouting all the way, but overtaken by grief at the impending departure. After a brief pūjā on the bank of the river, the idol was slowly let into the swirling waters as we all wept, including my uncle, a grown man who actually ran the district. Our Gods do not ask for votes or for money. All they want is your love and affection, for that is the only bond between a Hindu and his God, like the bond between a father and son, or between brothers.

In no other religion is there such a deep and lasting bond between Gods and men as there is among Hindus. For we are, after all, descended from the Gods, and from the mountains and rivers where They stand guard and watch our holy land. And, if once in a while they come down and sip a little milk from our spoons, why should it be a miracle? It's the most natural thing in the world.

A few of the news stories of the Milk Miracle are shown on the following pages.

NEWS ▫ LOCAL

Statue of Hindu God, Ganesha, drinks milk

Phenomenon witnessed in Fiji and around the world

By Hari Gaundar

HINDUS in Fiji and throughout the world are witnessing a phenomenon which has been receiving an international coverage through various televisions and radio stations.

According to the reports, Hindus not only in the temples but at their houses witnessed this phenomenon where statues of Lord Ganesha have been consuming milk.

People who have witnessed this later offered prayers and returned to their homes.

Hindu women offer milk to a stone sculpture in India

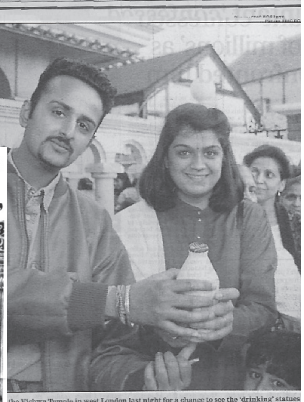
Hindus Claim Milky Miracle

LOS ANGELES TIMES

New Delhi, India — Indians by the millions rushed to see, and believed. ... prices rose as much as fourfold. ... The outpouring of faith cut across caste and education. "At first I did not believe it. But having

I cannot explain says Ramakrishna boss

'Miracles have been known to happen'



the Vishwa Temple in west London last night for a chance to see the 'drinking' statues

... to see milk-sipping idol

... building. Another ... dred worshippers ... stic. Many who left ... g seen "a miracle". ... ethan Lal, chauffeur, ... he temple, said: "Word ... fast and people kept ... les all want to see the

... on't believe n

TONIGHT'S WEATHER: CLOUDY

LATE PRICES EXTRA

Evening Standard

LONDON, FRIDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER, 1995 — INCORPORATING THE EVENING NEWS — 30p

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IT'S SO EASY TO PLAY – SEE PAGE 38 OF THE PAPER FOR DETAILS AND WINNING NUMBERS

THE AMAZING MILK 'MIRACLE'

Thousands flock to London Hindu temple as statues 'drink'

by TOM LEONARD

THEY CAME in their thousands, some clutching two-litre value packs, others bearing just a humble pint of semi-skimmed.

All through the night and from the early hours this morning, united London accountants and housewives in saris filed respectfully past the gilt-eyed statues of Hindu gods, some of them pausing to drop a brass bell to alert the gods to their presence as they approached the shrine in Southall.

There, under a blazer cutaway of the Himalayas, complete with a miniature stream gushing down into a sink, stood a marble bull less than a foot high.

In Southall's Vishwa's Hindu Temple, Neasden, one of the largest Hindu temples in Europe, the statues of eight gods are reported to have been drinking milk since Wednesday evening.

Stories from India that statues of the deities had been sipping milk sparked a feverish response from the faithful that has quickly spread to west London.

By noon today the crowd streams outside the temple in Lady Margaret Road had reached many thousands. Temple officials estimated that around 10,000 people had visited the little bull in the past 24 hours – 4,000 since cars this morning.

According to believers, and everyone seems to be putting a slightly different interpretation on events, the miracle is happening all over London – not just in temples but in people's houses.

Ten hundred yards down the road from the Southall temple, at 41, Lady Margaret Road, the owners of a semi-pebble model of Ganesh, the elephant god, said he had guided his way through 20 pints of milk in half as many hours. More than

Continued on Page 2 Col 6

Miracle on Lady Margaret Road: Worshippers at Southall's Vishwa's Hindu Tem... Thousands have brought milk for the gods to drink

£29,000

The Daily Post

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 1995 VOL. 7 NO. 221 40p (Inclusive of VAT)

Police begin hunt for Naitasiri thugs - bac...

A Hindu centu...

Milk miracle linked to Hind...

The Edmonton Jour...

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RECYCLED NEWSPR...

Edmonton Hindus gather around a statue of Lord Ganesha, which appeared to drink milk on Friday evening

A THIRST FOR MIRACLES

Milk-drinking idol renews faith, joy for city's Hindu community

DON THOMAS
Journal Staff Writer

Edmonton

Society Hindu temple in south Edmonton Friday night. It happened just as it had in New Delhi, said Su Suthakel, who came ... temple ... evening prayers ... wife, Nagula. They brought

Temples mobbed after 'milk miracle'

By Rahul Bedi in New Delhi

THOUSANDS of people *mobbed temples in the* Indian capital of New Delhi yesterday after a rumour that idols of Hindu gods were drinking milk brought as offerings.

Traffic was halted as police struggled to control crowds who gathered outside hundreds of temples with jugs and saucepans of milk for the marble idols of Ganesh, the Hindu god of wisdom and learning, and Shiva, his father, the god of destruction.

The rumours began around midnight after a Hindu in south Delhi claimed th... Ganesh idol in his neigh... hood had drunk a ... milk.

By early morning the ... had spread beyond ... Delhi to most other ... Indian towns, bringing ... a virtual standstill as ... rushed to temples to ... themselves.

Across Delhi, so ... ladies with silver jug... numbers full of milk co... seen standing alon... unedcated labo...

suspected holy man ... vami multi- ... istract at- ... al charges ... al him for ...

women to mile-long queues, awaiting their turn. Others claimed that small statues of

Tientallen miljoenen wereldwijd zien dat... ren getuige te zijn ge... weest van een wonder: ... de hebben marmeren ... goden melk zien ...

Indiase godenbeelden zuigen melk op

November, 1996 • Volume 17, Number 11 — North America Edition — US$2.75

HINDUISM TODAY

The Hindu Family Newspaper Affirming the Dharma and Recording the Modern History of Nearly a Billion Members of a Global Religion in Renaissance

PUBLISHED MONTHLY IN NINE EDITIONS: NORTH AMERICA, IBERA, DEEPAVALI, ATAVIA, INDIAN OCEAN, MALAYSIA, SINGAPORE, A DOZEN LANGUAGE EDITIONS AND THE WORLD WIDE WEB

"It's a Miracle!" Rejoice Millions As Lord Ganesha Receives Milk

"The" Supernatural Event of This Century Is Experienced Simultaneously Worldwide

Devotees in one of thousands to offer milk as Lord Ganesha at a temple in Edmonton, Canada. Inset, India, the phenomenon continued here for days.

September 29, 1995 India P

INDIA - OVER

SRI LANKA

People Throng Sindhi Temple

From **MOHAN SAMARASINGHE**

COLOMBO: Thousands of Sri Lankans flocked to Colombo's Sindhi temple to witness what worshippers said was the miracle of two Hindu gods sipping milk here, September 23.

People of all ages and religions streamed into the Sindhi community center, a seaside temple patronized mostly by Hindu devotees, where the marble statues of the deities Lord Ganesha and Lord Shiva, were placed wreathed in flowers.

Devotees offered milk in spoons to the trunk of elephant-headed Ganesha and to the mouth of Shiva and sang their praise as the liquid disappeared slowly.

"Do it slowly," a temple guardian told a female devotee as she awkwardly held the spoon to Ganesha's trunk. "You have to feed him like you feed a baby."

Suresh Pesumal, the Center's Secretary said Colombo got word of the miracle from a devotee in New Delhi, September 21,

Thousands of Indian devotees were reported to have claimed the miracle happened to them, although Indian scientists said it was all just mass delusion.

"Immediately our head priest offered milk and the gods accepted the offerings," Pesumal told Reuters.

Thousands of devotees and curious onlookers have flocked to the temple after hearing of the miracle, Pesumal said.

The temple's head priest Pandit Jaidev Sharma said this was traditionally the time of year when alms were offered to the gods.

"This is the period in which we feed our ancestors. That particular day (September 21) was when we were to feed them milk," Sharma said. Pesumal said he believed it was a heavenly gesture towards mortals.

"I feel that the gods are showing their power, specially to the younger generations who will now

"Do it slowly," a temple guardian told a female devotee as she awkwardly held the spoon to Ganesha's trunk. "You have to feed him like you feed a baby."

'Some G

LONDON: Anila Pren have the slightest doubt. miracle. Premji was one dreds of Hindus who fl the Vishwa temple in S West London, as word sp wildfire through the larg community that religiou had begun drinking milk c

After waiting patiently queue September 21, Pr scribed the moment when, her hand quivering, she held a spoonful of milk up to the temple's 15-inch (38 cm) high marble idol of Nandi, the bull ridden by the Hindu deity Shiva.

Hu into mou had cart Th idol tion

"We were told to hold th still because some people l anxious to feed it quickly milk was spilling. "Anot sitting next to the idol w ing my hand so it didn't held the spoon at level, a disappeared," Premji, v scribes herself as not part religious, said.

Her verdict? "To me it a miracle. It gave me a s feeling that there is a God

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EAST AFRICAN Standar

CITY EDITION No. 25300, Saturday September 23, 1995

Miracle or

Ganesha Idols Around the World 'Drink' Milk

Devotees offering milk to an idol of Lord Ganesha at the

By Narayanan Madhavan

NEW DELHI—Crowds swarmed into temples across India and neighboring Nepal on Sept. 21 after reports that idols of Hindu gods were drinking milk poured as sacred offerings.

Hindus packed temples as news spread that milk offered to lingams (phallic symbols) of Lord Shiva, or idols of Ganesha, the elephant-headed deity, disappeared.

Unbelievers protested. "Many people who believe in this kind of thing, they look for some miracle and do not want to put a critical mind on that," said Sanal Edamarukku, general secretary of the Indian Rationalist Association.

But believers, some converted by what they were sure they

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ble Public Milk Feeding

ere force that acts on the surface of the liquid tending to minimize its areas, and the other in capillarity, the action by which a liquid in contact with a soaked surface rises or falls due to the relative attraction between the liquid molecules and between the liquid and solid surface.

Since morning, people had thronged temples, hoping to see a "miraculous sight" of idols of Ganesh drinking milk offered to him. Scores swore by the event, drowning the voices of the few rationalists who tried to give a possible explanation.

Scientists at the National Institute of Science Technology and Development Studies (NISTADS) here said if any rough surface is wetter, the liquid creates a capillary channel which sucks in more liquid droplets.

Please See Page 26

preads to London

"To me it was just a miracle. It gave me a sense of feeling that there is a god, a sense of spirit on this Earth.

"My daughter was with me and she just couldn't believe it."

Scientists said the marvel was just mass delusion, explained by elementary physics.

But believers, in London as in India, were having none of it, insisting that a miracle was at hand.

"I believe that some great soul has descended on earth," Roshan Lal Bhanbari, chairman of the temple, told *London's Evening Standard* newspaper. (Reuters)

e" in Thai Temple

have faith in it you can see it with your eyes," said one ethnic Chinese woman from Singapore offering milk to an idol of the god Ganesha, the elephant-headed deity.

The priest of the Hindu

Hindu Statue "Sips Milk" in Roman Catholic Italy

ROME—Roman Catholic Italy, more used to "weeping" statues of the Virgin Mary, on Sept. 25 joined the latest "miracle" wave of Hindu idols that sip milk.

A store in Rome that sells Indian wares said a small metallic idol of the elephant-headed Ganesh, son of the Hindu god Shiva and his consort Parvati, had begun sipping milk from a spoon.

"We got a phone call from India and they told us the Ganesh was drinking milk. We tried over here and he was drinking milk," said Sanjay Daswani, whose family owns the store.

"We were all surprised and astonished," he told Reuters as a relative fed the idol a spoonful of milk for television cameras.

"We think in New Delhi a baby was born with the head of a Ganesh and a human body, and that's why he's drinking the milk," Daswani said.

"There's too much bad stuff happening in the world, and this baby was born to help us, to make the world a better place," he added.

There are very few Hindus in Italy but reports of purported miracles are common.

Earlier this year, miracle fever swept the country with a rash of reports of statues of the Virgin Mary weeping blood or tears. None has been verified by the Roman Catholic Church.

The substance Neapolitans believe that the blood of the city's patron saint, Gennaro, liquefied in a repeat of a 600-year-old ritual miracle brings good luck.

(Reuters)

Hong Kong Hindus Throng to Temples on Miracle News

By Kwan Chooi Tow

HONG KONG—Hong Kong's Hindus spent a second day on Sept. 22 offering milk to Hindu gods in the hope that their wishes would come true.

"I felt it (a figurine representing Ganesha) drank the whole spoon of milk," said Neelam Gupta, who visited a Hindu temple in Happy Valley on Hong Kong island on Sept. 22

Ganesha is the elephant-headed deity who is the son of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati.

Like thousands of other Hindus in the colony, Neelam received a call from her parents in Bombay, India, telling her a "miracle" was taking place as idols of Ganesha and Lord Shiva drank milk.

"I tried feeding the Ganesha statues at home with milk but it didn't work, so I came to the temple fed the Ganesh idol at the temple may have spilled.

Hong Kong is home to more than 20,000 Indians, many of them Hindus.

The devout believe their wishes will come true if an idol accepts an offering of milk.

Head priest Prakash Sharma said that 700-800 devotees had flocked to the temple when the reports first surfaced in India and spread to Nepal.

He claimed that most of the "milk-drinking" in Hong Kong was by statues of Ganesha, Lord Krishna and Lord Brahma.

A little girl started feeding the statue with milk using a spoon, the idol started drinking, he said.

Idols of the deities are given milk as offerings each day but this was the first time the idols had "drunk" milk, said the priest.

Another devotee said the temple was filled with hundreds of

Magazine free with today's ES Magaz

IT'S SO EASY TO PLAY – SEE PAGE 38 OF THE PAPER FOR DETA

THE AMAZ MILK 'MIR

Thousands flock to London Hindu temple as statues 'drink'

by TOM LEONARD

THEY CAME in their thousands, some clutching two-litre value packs, others bearing just a humble pint of semi-skimmed.

All through the night and from the early hours this morning, suited London accountants and housewives in saris filed respectfully past the glittering statues of Rama and Vishnu, some of them pausing to ring a brass bell to alert the gods to their presence as they approached the shrine in Southall.

There, under a plaster diorama of the Himalayas, complete with a miniature stream gushing down into a sink, stood a marble bull less than a foot high.

In Southall's Vishwa's Hindu Temple, Nandi, steed of Supreme Shiva, was apparently busy working miracles as he is reported to have been doing in Hindu temples all across the world.

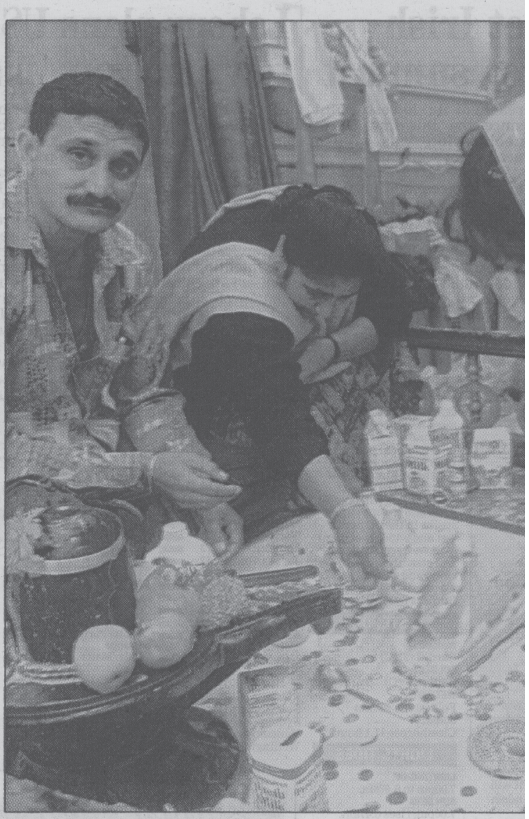
Stories from India that statues of the deities had been sipping milk sparked a feverish response from the faithful that has quickly spread to west London.

By noon today the crowd queuing outside the temple in Lady Margaret Road had reached more than 500. Temple officials estimated that around 10,000 people had visited the little bull in the past 24 hours — 6,000 since early this morning.

According to believers, and everyone seems to be putting a slightly different interpretation on events, the statues are sipping milk all over London — not just in temples but in people's houses.

Two hundred yards down the road from the Southall temple, at 61 Lady Margaret Road, the owners of a nine-inch clay model of Ganesh, the elephant god, said he had guzzled his way through 20 pints of milk in half as many hours. More than

Continued on Page 2 Col 6



Miracle on Lady Margaret Road: Worshippers at Southall's Vishwa's thousands have brought milk for the gods to drink

TV & RADIO GUIDE 32, 41 & 42 BUSINESS DAY 33 WEEKENDER 25 ENTERTAINMENT GUID

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'Miracle' continues for second

NEW YORK, Sept. 23 (PTI) Thousands of devotees across the United States thronged temples for the second day on Friday as idols of Lord Ganesha continued to accept milk offerings by the spoonfuls.

Television networks showed devotees offering the milk to the deity and milk disappearing.

"It really looks like a miracle," one reporter said.

Devotees rejected any argument that it had scientific explanation, saying in that case, there should be limit to the milk an idol can absorb. But there seems to be no limit.

In interviews, some devotees claimed that milk had vanished even when offered to idols made of brass or other metals. Though claims cannot be verified, the miracle seems to be making believers of staunch non-believers.

In one instance, a devotee reported that Ganesha did not accept milk when offered by a non-believer but promptly drank it moments later when offered by a believer.

Most newspapers, both regional and nationally circulated, had comprehensive coverage of the miracle in India with photos showing devotees thronging the temples.

Press Trust of India received several telephone calls again on Friday asking for details but when told that there could be scientific explanation, most laughed derisively.

"'Scientists' explanation is phony. Lord is making his presence felt and that makes them nervous," a caller shouted angrily and banged the receiver.

Another asked have you offered milk to Ganesha. When this correspondent replied in the negative, the caller retorted, "Then you have no business to talk about scientific explanation. Keep explanation to yourself. Tell me about the miracle."

"Yet another miracle by the almighty to remind the people of the presence of a higher power and to persuade them to ask for forgiveness not only from him but from each other and change their ways," a Jewish theology scholar was quoted as saying after seeing the television coverage of the miracle.

The day on which it happened is auspicious also according Hebrew calendar, said Moshe Yogev, a senior researcher at Kabala Center here.

Ruling out any human involvement, he said the secret of universe will soon be revealed if such miracles happen.

DHAKA: Thousands of Hindu devotees thronged temples in different cities of Bangladesh on Friday to offer milk to Hindu deities, who they believed, were drinking the offering.

When devotees offered spoonfuls of milk to the idols of gods in temples in Gopalgunj district in southern Bangladesh, the milk disappeared, vernacular daily *Sangbad* reported today quoting witnesses.

Another vernacular daily *Banglabazar Patrika* frontpaged a photograph today showing Hindu devotees offering milk to the idol of Lord Ganesh at a temple in the Bangladesh capital.

Idols of Ganesh and Gopal also "drank" milk at a temple in the northern Bangladeshi town of Natore, said *Dainik Janakantha* quoting witnesses.

The news of gods drinking the milk offered to them in Indian temples have been getting front-page coverage in Dhaka newspapers for the last two days.

LONDON: Anila Premji didn't have the slightest doubt. It was a miracle. Premji was one of hundreds of Hindus who flocked to the Vishwa temple in Southall, West London, as word spread like wildfire through the Capital's large Indian community that religious statues had begun drinking milk offerings, reports Reuter.

After waiting patiently in a long queue on Thursday night, Premji described the moment when, her hand quivering, she held a spoonful of milk up to the temple's 15-inch (38 cm) high marble idol of Nandi, the bull ridden by the Hindu deity Shiva.

"We were told to hold the spoon still because some people had been anxious to feed it quickly and the milk was spilling," Premji, who describes herself as not particularly religious, said.

"To me it was just a miracle. It gave me a sense of feeling that there is a god, a sense of spirit on this earth."

By mid-morning yesterday hundreds of happy worshippers, young and old, had returned in the autumn sunshine and waited to enter the ornate shrine.

Attendants hurriedly shunted the devotees up to an onion-domed centrepiece where the white marble icon was set in front of an artificial running stream.

Some brought their own milk in bottles and jugs. Others, kneeling to

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believers are arguing that miracles defy logic. Others have come up with explanations about Hinduism, which came into the news here as never before, Divyesh Patel, a priest in Wembley, says, "The milk was disappearing then. It is not happening any more. If it was rolling down then, why isn't rolling

been dismissed as people believing what they want to believe. The believers have seen the doubters as disbelieving what they want to disbelieve.

Hindus in Germany also Experience Phenomenon

HAMBURG (Reuters) -- Hindus in the German city of Hamburg said they also experienced the phenomenon of religious statues "drinking" milk which has excited thousands of their brethren in India and elsewhere.

The leader of Hamburg's Afghan Hindu community, Marinder Kumar Goswami, said that more than 1,000 Hindus flocked at the weekend to his temple in a building near the northern city's main railway station. "It's a sign from the gods," he said.

The craze began after reports from a Delhi temple that its statues of the Hindu deity Shiva and his elephant-headed son Ganesh had begun sipping milk offerings.

The news swept through India and triggered similar reports from as far afield as London and Rome. Now the Hamburg faithful believe the same thing is happening to their idols. They say their Ganesh statue has consumed around 130 liters (28 gallons) of milk in the last few days. "I even heard Ganesh swallowing the milk," said 38-year-old Menakshi Chanana after holding a spoon of milk from a bronze bowl up to the statue's mouth. Some of the milk runs down the statue -- but less than the spoon contained.

Roman Catholic Italy, more used to "weeping" statues of the Virgin Mary, joined the latest "miracle" wave on Sept. 25.

A store in Rome that sells Indian wares said a small metallic idol of Lord Ganesh had begun sipping milk from a spoon. "We got a phone call from India and they told us the Ganesh was drinking milk. We tried over here and he was drinking milk," said Sanjay Daswani, whose family owns the store.

"We were all surprised and astonished," he told Reuters as a relative fed the idol a spoonful of milk for television cameras. Thousands of Hindus around the world, including in Britain and the United States, have flocked to temples in the hope of seeing the same phenomenon.

Scientists have spoken of mass delusion while secular Indian political parties have accused the Hindu right wing of perpetrating a hoax to whip up religious fever and win votes.

"We think in New Delhi a baby was born with the head of a Ganesh and a human body, and that's why he's drinking the milk," Daswani said.

"There's too much bad stuff happening in the world, and this baby was born to help us, to make the world a better place," he added. There are very few Hindus in Italy but reports of purported miracles are common. Earlier this year, miracle fever swept the country with a rash of reports of statues of the Virgin Mary weeping blood or tears. None has been verified by the Roman Catholic Church.

Last month, the substance Neapolitans believe is the blood of the city's patron saint, Gennaro, liquefied in a repeat of a 600-year-old ritual miracle they believe brings good luck.

India mail

No 277 London, September 28th - October 4th 1995 50p/Week

News
Snake venom brings nirvana to junkies
Page 6

Special Feature
Indiamail's guide to winter holidays in India
Pages 11, 12, 21, 22

Arts
Tamasha brings its own version of Lorca's Yerma
Page 8

Millions queue to witness 'Act of God'

DAILY NATION

The newspaper that serves the nation

No. 10824, Nairobi, Saturday, September 23, 1995 Price KSh15/00

'milk miracle' frenzy sprea

'Milk-drinking' idol picture on page 2

Patriot

NEW DELHI FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 22, 1995

The miracle of vanishi

The Guard

MILK MIRACLE

Elementary Physics, Gullible Public Create Mass Hysteria of Milk Feeding

Hindu Statue "Sips Milk" in Roman Catholic Italy

Hindu Idols' "Milk Miracle" Spreads to Indonesia

Shiva Fever Spreads to London

"Milk Miracle" in Thai Temple

Hong Kong Hindus Throng Temples on Miracle News

Believers thirst for a miracle from Hong Kong to Southall

by RICHARD HOLLIDAY

Phenomenon leads to milk scarcity

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Sept. 21. — The strange phenomenon of idols of God accepting milk in the Capital led to an artificial scarcity of milk here today.

The phenomenon forced sceptics and devotees to experiment whether their offerings were being accepted by God or not.

Shops and vendors did brisk business and by early afternoon milk was not available at most outlets. The demand and supply graph of the commodity suddenly went haywire and milk was being sold at a premium — at the few outlets where it was available.

Mother Dairy milk booths, run by a Gujarat-based milk producers' cooperative, have sold 30% more milk while milk in polythene packets was freely available outside major temples particularly in South Delhi.

Though officials of Delhi Milk Scheme refuted "any shortage" of milk in the market, they added that milk supply to the Capital will be increased tomorrow. The DMS supplies 3,00,000 litres every day.

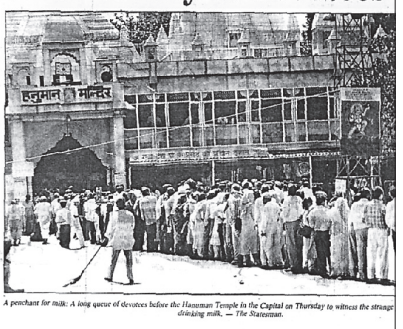
Mr Tiwari assured that tomorrow there will be no shortage of milk for domestic consumption, as the Delhi Milk Scheme and Mother Dairy had been asked to make arrangements for supply of 1,00,000 litres of fresh milk in addition to the normal supply.

He added that the Government of Delhi was closely monitoring the prices and availability of fresh milk.

THE STATESMAN METRO

Delhi witnesses frenzy of devotees

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE



A penchant for milk: A long queue of devotees before the Hanuman Temple in the Capital on Thursday to witness the strange drinking milk. — The Statesman.

describes herself as not particularly religious, said. Her verdict?

the temple, told *London's Evening Standard* newspaper. (Reuters)

"Milk Miracle" in Thai Temple

BANGKOK—Hundreds of Indians from Thailand along with Buddhist Thais and other Asians rushed to a main Hindu temple on Sept. 22 after reports that idols of Hindu gods were drinking milk poured at sacred offerings.

"It's a matter of faith, if you have faith in it you can see it with your eyes," said one ethnic Chinese woman from Singapore offering milk to an idol of the god Ganesha, the elephant-headed deity.

The priest of the Hindu Samaj temple in central Bangkok said he was told in telephone calls from India and the United States about the apparent miracles taking place at temples elsewhere.

"Faith is a matter of the heart, not the mind," said Sawami Odejsi Maharaj, when asked if the phenomenom was real.

A long queue of worshippers, many of them ethnic Thai and Chinese, waited to pay their respects at the temple. Many told Reuters

headed deity who is the son of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati.

Like thousands of other Hindus in the colony, Neelam received a call from her parents in Bombay, India, telling her a "miracle" was taking place as idols of Ganesha and Lord Shiva drank milk.

"I tried feeding the Ganesha statues at home with milk but it didn't work, so I came to the temple this morning," said Neelam, who conceded that some of the milk she

by statues of Ganesha, Lord Krishna and Lord Brahma.

A little girl started feeding the statue with milk using a spoon, the idol started drinking, he said.

Idols of the deities are given milk as offerings each day but this was the first time the idols had "drunk" milk, said the priest.

Another devotee said the temple was filled with hundreds of people who trooped in until 3 a.m.

(Reuters)

Bangla Faithful Watch Milk "Miracle"

By Mujtoba Morshed

DHAKA—Thousands of Bangladeshi Hindus flocked to Dhaka's Narayan Jiu temple on Sept. 23 to witness what worshippers said was the miracle of an el- milk. amed where Lord

Ganesh, was placed wreathed in flowers.

The devotees offered milk in spoons to the elephant-head Ganesh's small trunk and the liquid vanished in seconds.

Gouri Benarjee, a 20-year-old spinster, said she was happy that Ganesh had accepted her offer. "This will bring me his blessings," she said.

The temple's chief priest, Nitai Benarjee, said at least 2,000 people fed the Ganesh fresh milk on Sept. 23 morning.

Thousands had made offerings since midnight on Sept. 22 after hearing claims of similar miracle happenings in India. Indian scientists said the marvel was just mass delusion.

Panna Dey, 32, said at first he did not believe the reports. "I thought they were just rumors but now I have seen it myself. I firmly

P. Kissoon
LL.B.
nd Solicitor
Citizenship Law
• Refugees

Deity milk miracle? Seeing is believing

By WONG CHUN WAI, M. KRISHNAMOORTHY and HAH FOONG LIAN

KUALA LUMPUR: Miracle, hoax, hysteria, clever illusion? But seeing is believing, as the saying goes.

Following reports on Thursday of Hindus in India claiming that stone idols had begun drinking milk offerings, a similar phenomenon has been reported in Malaysia and other countries.

Several homes and temples in Kuala Lumpur, Seremban and Penang have claimed such happenings.

Those who saw the "milk miracle" including cynical reporters came away awestruck, with Hindus saying it was a form of blessing.

The frenzy which started in India has crossed the borders to Japan, Jakarta, Hong Kong, Singapore, Britain, Australia

two non-Hindus went to check them out.

A devotee, who wished to be known only as Mrs Prabaha, in Taman Tun Dr Ismail showed reporters how it happened.

Mrs Prabaha, a vegetarian since July and having fasted the whole day out of sheer disbelief, described what had happened in her home as "absolutely incredible."

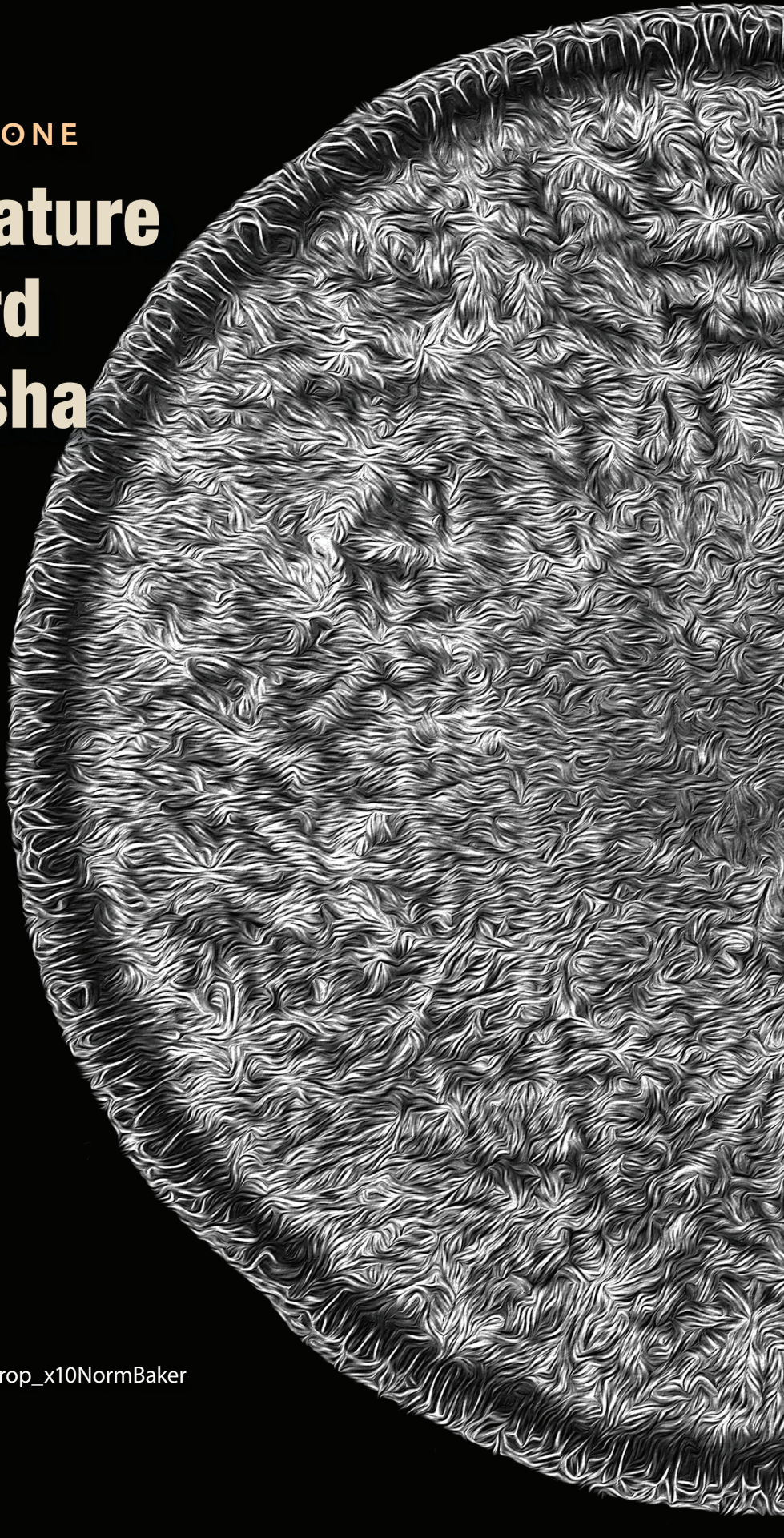
"Wash your hands in the kitchen, not in the toilet. Then, I will take you to the altar and we will pray, and I can demonstrate to you how the *Nandi* (the guardian of Lord Siva's temple) will sip the milk," she said.

She took a teaspoonful of milk and held an empty teaspoon below the figurine so that any spillage would be seen.

As the spoon was brought close to the idol's mouth, slowly but gradually the milk

CHAPTER ONE

The Nature of Lord Ganesha



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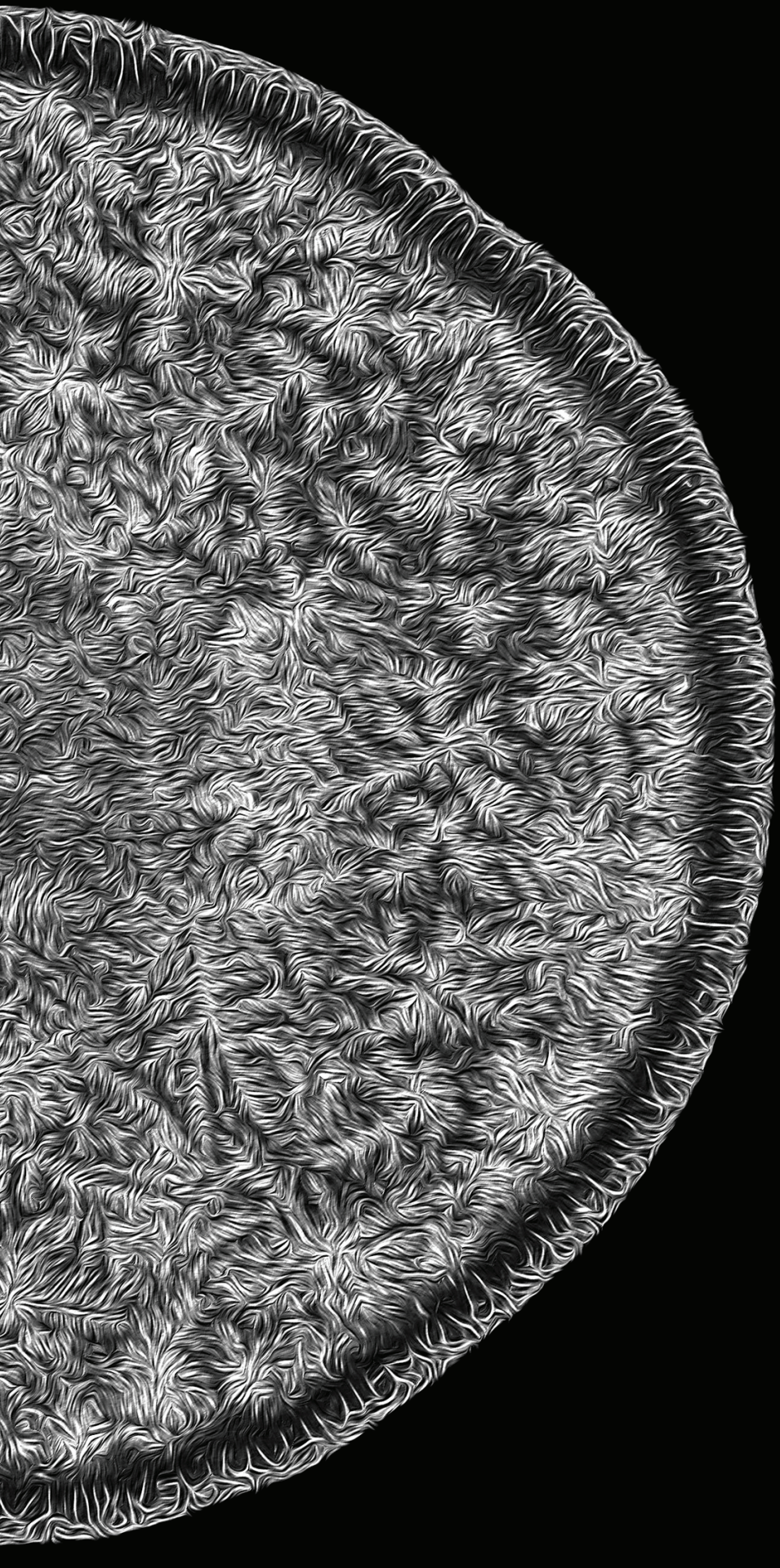


The Nature of Lord Gaṇeśa

Śrī Gaṇeśasya Svabhāvaḥ

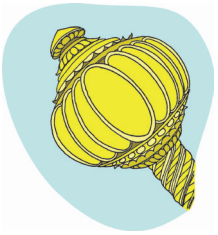
श्रीगणेशस्य स्वभावः

TRIAD OF THREE GREAT PILLARS HAVE HELD HINDUISM HIGH, century after century: the satgurus, the temples and the scriptures. Together they echo the greatness of the loving God Gaṇeśa, the Lord of Dharma, son of Śiva. For untold millennia our ṛishis and sages have proclaimed the profound depths of the mind, assuring us that we, too, can and must come to know God and the Gods. It is the living presence of these satgurus and their spoken teachings which has brought to life the traditional practices and philosophy of the Sanātana Dharma. Now we shall delve into the nature of Lord Gaṇeśa, what He is like, what functions this great God performs and find out how each seeker can make Him a vital part of daily life's path of experience.

Once a psychic connection is made with Lord Gaṇeśa—the Deity who manifests in several forms, including the elephant-headed Lord of Categories and Remover of Obstacles—one is brought slowly into the mysteries of the Sanātana Dharma. Such an inner connection, which can be as subtle as a feeling, as tenuous as a dream or as bold as a personal visit, is also an entering into one's own *mūlādhāra* chakra, governed by the planet Mercury, for every opening into a new chakra is also an introduction to the Deity who governs that state of consciousness and the planet to which that chakra is connected.

The Sanātana Dharma, known today as Hinduism, is the only living religion on the planet that does not look to a human founder for its source of inspiration, scripture or historical beginning. It is timeless and ageless. Sanātana Dharma, the root religion of humankind, looks inward for its origins, into the subtlest superconscious realm within the microcosm, which it calls the Kāraṇaloka, Śivaloka or Third World. This great religion has no single organized headquarters on the material plane. Nor does it have a one hierarchy. Who then is in charge of Hinduism? Why, it is none other than our loving Gaṇeśa! He doesn't live in Rome or in Salt Lake City. Lord Gaṇeśa lives simultaneously everywhere Hindus worship and pray within themselves. He doesn't have to be reappointed from time to time, because yugas and yugas ago He was permanently and irrevocably appointed when He was created for this work.

Gaṇeśa, the Great Gatekeeper



Yes, it is the Great Gaṇeśa who is the gateway for seekers into the world's most ancient faith. He is the inner authority, the guardian, the one who grants access to the spiritual mysteries of the Sanātana Dharma. All Hindus worship Him, regardless of their sectarian or philosophical positions. He truly binds them together in His love. This great God is both the beginning of the Hindu religion and the meeting ground for all its devotees. And that is only proper, inasmuch as Gaṇeśa is the personification of the material universe. The universe in all of its varied and various magnificent manifestations is nothing but the body of this cheerfully portly God.

Gaṇeśa sits on the psychic lotus of the *mūlādhāra* chakra, the ganglia of nerves at the base of the spine within everyone. This chakra governs time, matter and memory. As the spiritual aspirant is lifted up from fear and confusion into conscious awareness of right thought, right speech and right action, the *mūlādhāra* chakra becomes activated. It is then that the seeker, with heart filled with love, encounters the holy feet of Lord Gaṇeśa. As the spiritual seeker worships the loving elephant-faced God, clearness of mind comes more and more as he automatically and very slowly enters the Hindu path to enlightenment. Once the connection is firmly established between the devotee and Gaṇeśa, all of the currents of the devotee's mind and body become harmonized. After that strong connection is made, should he falter on the spiritual path, he has gained divine protection.

But the seeker loses one thing. He loses his free, instinctive willfulness. It is lost forever. Yet it is not a great loss. Man's own personal willfulness, his animalistic free will, is a feeble and insignificant force when compared to Lord Gaṇeśa's divine will. When beholden to God Gaṇeśa and inwardly awakened enough to be attuned to His will, it is then quite natural that the instinctive will bows down. Personal likes and dislikes vanish. Limited faculties of reason and analysis are overpowered and subdued by a greater will, a cosmic will, the will of dharma. When sufficient humility has been awakened, it is easy to surrender personal, instinctive willfulness to the greater subsuperconscious will of dharma. It happens most naturally, but very slowly, because Lord Gaṇeśa, of all the many Gods, proceeds with methodic deliberation. He is the careful, loving guide on the inner path of all seekers.

Among all the wonderful Hindu Deities, Lord Gaṇeśa is the closest to the material plane of consciousness, most easily contacted and most able to assist

us in our day-to-day life and concerns. In His hands Gaṇeśa wields a noose and a goad. With the noose He can hold you close or hold obstacles close. Gaṇeśa can capture and confine both blessings and obstacles. With the goad, Gaṇeśa can strike and repel obstacles. This Lord is called the Remover of Obstacles; but He also places obstacles in our way, for sometimes His devotees are proceeding in the wrong direction, and His obstacles block their progress and guide them slowly back onto the straight path of dharma. When instinctive willfulness causes the seeker to decide to step out of the boundaries of dharma, the Lord of Obstacles is there to block the way. His emblem is the swastika, symbolizing His circuitous course in guiding the seeker through life's perplexing experiences.

It is through the worship of Lord Gaṇeśa that we come to know the venerable Lord Murugan, and lastly Supreme God Śiva, their Creator, our Father-Mother God, Lord of all creation, preservation and dissolution.

Adopted by the Elephant God

Seekers of Truth come from many backgrounds, many religions, and have trod many paths. Having become acquainted with Lord Gaṇeśa, they may wonder how their past can participate in their present aspirations. "What am I doing worshiping an elephant-faced God and loving it?" they may wonder. "What do I do now to harmonize this unfoldment with my previous upbringing?"

There is a way to reconcile this subconscious dilemma. Let's not "pack it away in denial," as they say; let's face up to the spiritual awakening. Truth is, you have a loving friend in Gaṇeśa, who, if we may use the word, is the pope of the Hindu religion. And you are by no means alone. One fourth of the human race is acquainted with Gaṇeśa—twenty-five percent of the people on this planet—1.25 billion, and that number is growing year by year.

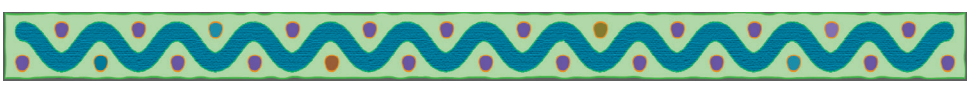
Our loving Gaṇeśa leads his devotees deep into the oldest religion on planet Earth. There are two ways to come into Hinduism. One is to be born into the Hindu religion and be carried in your mother's arms to the temple, there to be inwardly and psychically connected to our loving God, Gaṇeśa. So strong are those early impressions and *saṁskāras* that they carry you through life. Another way is to unfold naturally to the point of being ready to formally enter Hinduism, to supplicate, to sincerely entreat the guardians of that religion to allow you to be a part of that immense and ancient tradition. You have to want to be a Hindu so strongly, so sincerely, that Lord Gaṇeśa lifts you out of the fog of the materialistic conscious mind, establishing a connection and a relationship with you. This is a personal relationship with the Deity. There is nobody

in-between—just you and the God, Lord Gaṇeśa. It's like being adopted, in a way. If you were an orphan or abandoned on the streets of São Paulo or Madras or on the streets of wherever there are little kids running around, you would be "free." You could go through life listening to no one and exercising unrestricted free will, free instinctive will. If you had a developed intellect, then you could exercise an intellectual will. You could do anything that you wanted to do, absolutely anything. Of course, you would find that as you attempted to fulfill your desires, you were limited, sometimes prevented, by the natural forces within and without. But you could attempt anything.

If you were fortunate enough, foster parents might come along to help you. They would adopt you and take you into their home. Your new mother would begin to lovingly guide and direct your life. She would tell you, "You can play as you like in this room, but not in the others." She is a wise mother and knows that you are accustomed to having your own way, so she lets you play freely within the confines of your own room. But if she catches you playing in another room, she might say firmly, "You may play in your room, not here in this room." You have lost your "free will" in being adopted by a mother and father, you are a part of their family now, and your well-being, your education, your training all now come under their will, to which you must adjust yourself and obey. They will watch over you and discipline you morning and night. They will protect you from getting into trouble with your "free will." The modern concept of freedom leads to the darker chakras below the *mūlādhāra* chakra. Anguish is there.

Developing a Personal Relationship

It is the same when you evolve a relationship, a personal relationship, with the Deity Lord Gaṇeśa. He will not allow you to use your free will to get into difficulties. Guiding you carefully and protecting you along your way in your natural karma through life is His concern. Someone once said, "I worship Lord Śiva, I worship Lord Murugan, but I have never really gotten acquainted with Lord Gaṇeśa." I responded, "You worship Śiva and Lord Murugan, and that is wonderful. But unless you have established a personal relationship with Lord Gaṇeśa, your worship of any of the Gods is probably more according to your own thoughts and fancy than true worship. Until you have established a rapport with Lord Gaṇeśa, you cannot establish a relationship with Kṛishṇa, Ayyappan, Amman, Vishṇu, Rāma, Hanumān, Lakshmī, Sitā, Rādharāṇi, Śiva or Murugan, outside of your own limited concepts. It is Gaṇeśa who introduces you to the millions of Gods of the Hindu pantheon, no one else. That is the way it works."



Yes, little by little, slowly, imperceptibly, a relationship evolves, a very personal, loving relationship, between the devotee and the elephant-faced God. Psychic protection is granted, physical protection, mental and emotional protection are all granted as boons by Him. He will not allow His devotees to use their free, instinctive willfulness to make more *kukarma* by getting into difficulties. Rather, He will guide them carefully, protecting them every moment along the way so that their natural birth karmas may be worked through and *sukarma* created by right living. This is His main concern. Lord Gaṇeśa loves and cares for His devotees. Once the devotee is connected to Him through the awakening of the *mūlādhāra* chakra, loneliness is never experienced.

Gaṇeśa is a truly wonderful, loving God. He has an extraordinary knack for unweaving complicated situations and making them simple. He can unweave his devotees from their karma, simplifying and purifying their lives. But this only happens after they have established a personal relationship with Him. Soon thereafter, changes begin to happen in their lives; and when they go through difficult times, they no longer become angry or live in fear or worry. When difficult times come, they know it is because they are being unwound from accumulated and congested, difficult karmas or being turned in a new direction altogether. They know that at such a time they have to consciously surrender their free, instinctive willfulness and not fight the divine happenings, but allow the God's divine will to guide their life. Such is the spiritual path of total surrender, known as *prapatti*.

The Meaning of Grace

"What about the grace of the Deity?" seekers ask. Grace is received from the God when you are consistent in your worship, consistent in your discipline, consistent in your bhakti, your devotion. With such a foundation in your life, a great śakti, a force or power, will come from Lord Gaṇeśa. This is grace. It is uplifting. It comes unexpectedly. When grace comes, your mind may change and your heart may melt. Your sight will become clear and penetrating. You may say, "I have been graced to see everything differently." New doors will begin to open for you, and as you go through them, your life will become more full, more wonderful. And the grace of it is that it would not have ordinarily happened to you.

Seekers also inquire, "What is the difference between grace and a boon from the Gods?" Grace is not exactly a boon. A boon comes as the result of something that you ask for and receive. A boon is quite specific. Grace comes because of the state of the soul in conjunction with its particular karma. It

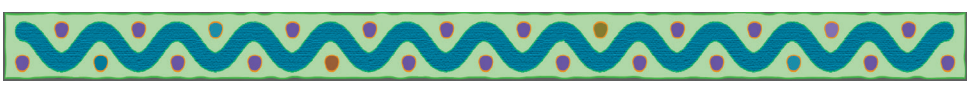
comes because we have done everything right up to a certain point in time according to the laws of dharma. It is then that the grace of the God comes. Grace is not for a specific need or event in our life, as a boon would be. Grace is more of a complete transformation—a metamorphosis. After receiving grace of a God, the devotee can never be the same again, never look at life again in the old way.

By grace we are directed deeper into spiritual life, pointed in the right direction, carefully guided on the San Mārga, the straight path to our supreme God. After grace has been received, our thoughts are enlivened, our life is inspired with enthusiasm and energy, and we live daily in the joyous knowledge that everything is all right, everything is happening around us in accord with our karma, our dharma and God's gracious will.

The Gods Are Real Beings, Not Mere Symbols

Many people look at the Gods as mere symbols, representations of forces or mind areas. Actually, the Gods are beings, and down through the ages ordinary men and women, great saints and sages, prophets and mystics in all cultures have inwardly seen, heard and been profoundly influenced by these superconscious, inner-plane, inner-galactic beings. Lord Gaṇeśa is just such a being. He can think just as we can think. He can see and understand and make decisions—decisions so vast in their implications and complexity that we could never comprehend them with our human faculties of limited understanding.

In recent history, missionaries and others from the Western religions have told the Indian people over and over again that their Gods are not real beings, but merely symbols of spiritual matters—and unfortunately many have begun to believe this and look at their Gods in this way. Even among Hindus there are quite a few who don't believe in inner-world beings. Their belief is restricted to the people they see in the physical world, and that is all. You dare not tell them differently. It is very difficult, but not impossible, to introduce them to the grand philosophy which is based solely on worship, meditation, inner discipline and the search for Absolute Truth. But this is too high-minded for those living in the everyday materialistic consciousness. For the knowledge of inner worlds to become accepted, a personal realization has to occur. This is a slow process for the materialist, a very slow process, and only Lord Gaṇeśa can help it along. To contact Lord Gaṇeśa, it is imperative that the materialist visit one of His temples or shrines, to make initial contact. It only takes one meeting.



How to Approach the Deity

When you approach the Deity, you should believe that Gaṇeśa feels your presence, that He sees you just as you see Him. In thus seeing Him in very human terms, you will get to know Him better. You will develop a very human relationship with Him. It is especially important that you develop this relationship with Lord Gaṇeśa. It will not be difficult to nurture a friendly feeling for Him, because Gaṇeśa is the Deity who governs our instinctive-intellectual state of mind. He governs the instinctive mind of all the animals, the insects, the birds and the fish, and governs, as well, all the forces of *prakṛiti,* nature. Lord Gaṇeśa is also the Deity who governs the higher intellectual mind, of science and profound knowledge. This is why they call Him Lord of Categories. As Lord of Categories, He organizes and clears the intellectual mind so that individual awareness can flow unhindered in the many areas of developing thought. As Lord of Obstacles, He creates and removes obstacles so that karma becomes more and more perfect as the refinement process of living through the experiences of life continues.

In the temples of India, even the offerings that come in through the day from pilgrims, who bring silver, gold and gifts of all kinds to be placed into the *hundi,* are counted at nightfall before the Deity. He sees this and is told of all that was given to Him, and He knows. At night, the Deity is ceremoniously put to bed. They treat Him in very human terms. In the morning He is symbolically awakened, then bathed and dressed. The Deity is treated just as if He were a human person. Well, in the Third World that kind of dedication, intense bhakti, is noticed, and it is appreciated.

Connecting the Three Worlds: Hindu Magic

Now you might wonder, "Where are the inner worlds?" It is where you were just before you were conceived. They are in the nonphysical microcosm of this macrocosm. When you were conceived, you began to slowly grow a new physical body inside your mother. At that time you were living in your astral body in the nonphysical microcosm. You existed, to be sure, but not in this physical macrocosm.

The devas and Deities are all in that nonphysical microcosm. They actually exist inside material existence, for there are many worlds, or planes of existence, within the physical world. If you were to go into the physical microcosm, into a cell and into an atom, and into the inside of that and the inside of that, you would come out in the macrocosm of the Gods. This is called the Śivaloka or Third World. Their macrocosm is bigger than our macrocosm.

The concept of this inner space is different than we ordinarily conceive. Even though their macrocosm exists within this macrocosm, it is larger than this macrocosm. Of course, that immensity is in another dimension, another world. And each world is larger than the one before—the world of departed souls is larger than this physical world, and the world of the Gods is much larger than the heaven worlds. Therefore, in a tiny space in this physical world hundreds of thousands of devas exist—in a very tiny space.

Establishing the Link through Pūjā

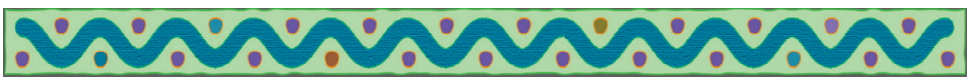
When the temple priest invokes the inner worlds and the beings within them, he is consciously trying to establish a channel of communication. When he is successful, this physical microcosm opens into the *devonic* macrocosm. In other words, through conscious effort he connects the inner and outer worlds, even to the point that devotees may see the transfiguration of the God, or Mahādeva, superimposed over the stone image of the Deity in the temple. They can actually see the God as He is in the inner world. Many, many awakened souls have seen such things—the eyes of the God moving, for instance—and some gurus can actually hear the God speak to them. The God is still in the inner world when this happens. It is the temple that has tuned into His world. This is much like live TV. Hundreds of sets can be tuned into the same station at the same time and view actual happenings as they occur.

The God, therefore, does not travel from the altar of one temple to the altar of another temple. The procedure is similar to that of dialing a friend on the telephone and bringing his voice across a vast distance into your ear. The friend can be heard quite clearly, but he has not moved to another place. The telephone could be likened to a connection between the gross and the subtle worlds, the world of matter and the worlds of spirit, or *ākāśa*.

Where Do We Go When We "Die?"

Where does the soul go when a person dies? It goes into the subtle microcosm and then into a larger macrocosm, or greater world, and ceases for a time to function in this gross macrocosm because it is not living in a physical body. At death, the soul drops off the physical body and travels in and in and in to subtle worlds, inner worlds of existence that have their own expansive space, their own macrocosm.

Small children, four or five years old, who can speak but have not yet become too immersed in the learned reality of the conscious or external mind, often tell their parents that they remember when they were born and even



before. I have had children tell me, "I came from a world that was bigger than this world." And they talked about the activities that go on there and described the people living there. Of course, as they grow older and become involved in the external thought processes, these memories fade away. This is the kind of experiential knowledge that makes religion come alive in us, more real and useful. True religion should be the most real and solid and certain thing in our entire life. When we ponder these inner worlds, we learn from within ourselves how they relate and interrelate with each other.

Ponder the many visions that prophets have spoken of experiencing, of all the angels or devas that have graced mankind with their presence and their prophecies. Ponder the mystic human events that cannot adequately be explained by the rational intellect. Think of them all in terms of the inner worlds of existence, and all will become clear. Yes, one day it will all become clear, from the inside of you to the external intellect. This is real knowing. This is the building of faith. This is true Hinduism, the bedrock of daily life. When this knowing comes from the depths of your knowing state of consciousness, the temple will be the home of the Gods to you.

Worship and Meditation on Lord Gaṇeśa

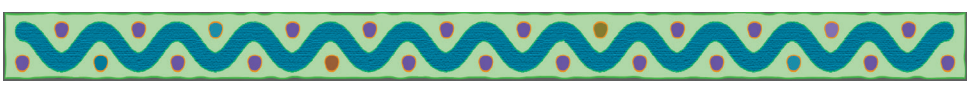
Worship, bhakti yoga, is a definite discipline and practice to be perfected according to the aptitude of the devotee. After bathing and preparing the mind, approach Lord Gaṇeśa in the shrine or temple, bringing a small gift or flower to be placed at His holy feet. Consider that you are approaching and about to meet the most important person in the world. Make your offering and prostrate. As you prostrate, feel the energies of love and devotion flow along your spine and out through the top of the head and into the home shrine altar or

sanctum sanctorum, *garbhagṛiha,* of the temple, and offer those pure actinic energies to Lord Gaṇeśa. Rise and walk slowly three times around the sanctum, always clockwise.

Meditation, *dhyāna* yoga, is a discipline you can perform after worshiping that will, when diligently and consistently practiced, bring its own rewards. Sit before the Deity and bring up the images of your own father and mother, then the family guru and finally the *darśana* of the elephant Lord. Now meditate upon His form, His eyes, His ears, His trunk, His two tusks, His belly, in which rests the whole world. The first time your mind wanders into the thought patterns of daily life, bring it back to your parents, your guru and the first Lord to be worshiped before proceeding on to any other of the 330 million Gods of our ancient Sanātana Dharma.

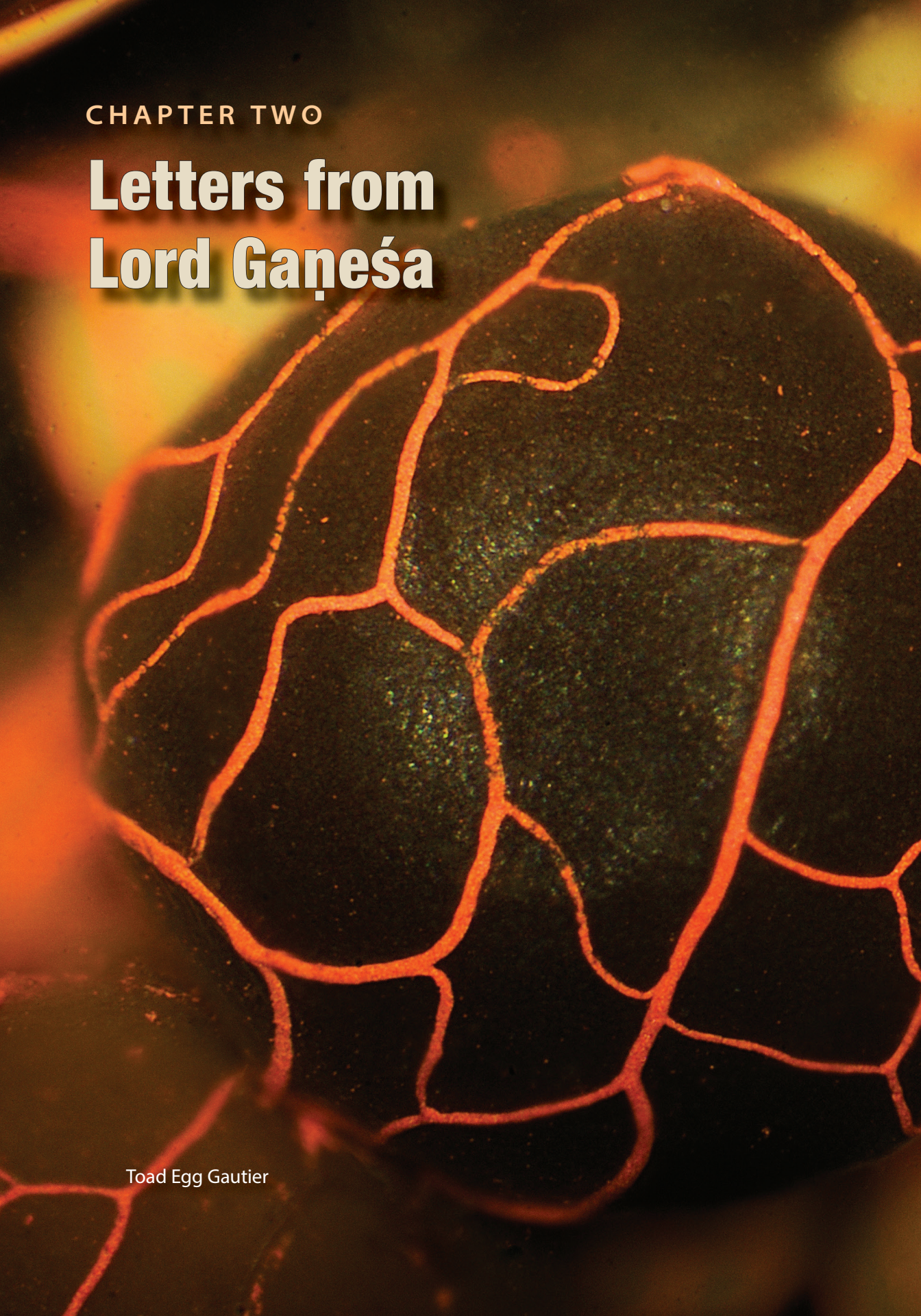
The objective is to maintain an unbroken continuity of thought and to not allow the mind to wander away from the *darśana* of the God. You can begin this meditation by pondering the obvious physical properties of the worshipful image. If it is made of stone, think of the stone. How large is it? Where was it quarried and how was it carved? What are the various parts of the Deity and what do they mean? What are his symbols and what do they mean? Recall them to memory. If it is a picture of Gaṇeśa, ponder how that picture was produced. Continue to explore the Lord Gaṇeśa with your mind. Later you can move on to less physical points of concentration. You will find that your awareness or mind will wander to unrelated areas, to concerns of the past or worries of the future. When it does, bring awareness back to your point of concentration—the Deity, Lord Gaṇeśa. Begin again your stream of thoughts toward Him, and when the mind once again wanders, use your willpower to bring it back to His *darśana.*

This may be difficult at first, but constant practice will unfold new knowledge from within you, knowledge that you never knew existed and did not learn from the outside. When that happens, concentration is strong and meditation is not far away. You should be able to have twenty, thirty or even fifty thoughts on loving Gaṇeśa in sequence without awareness being distracted into areas of the external mind. It will help if you learn to breathe diaphragmatically during these exercises. Breathe deeply but naturally, without strain or effort. As we control the *prāṇas* of the breath, we simultaneously control awareness so that it remains steady and does not move here and there. You also have to teach the body to sit still, to remain poised and not restless. All of this will come in time, not immediately. Be patient. Never become upset with yourself when distractions arise, for that is a greater distraction still. Simply



accept each departure from your concentration as an opportunity to become stronger and more one-pointed, and then quietly and firmly bring awareness back to its subject, Lord Gaṇeśa.

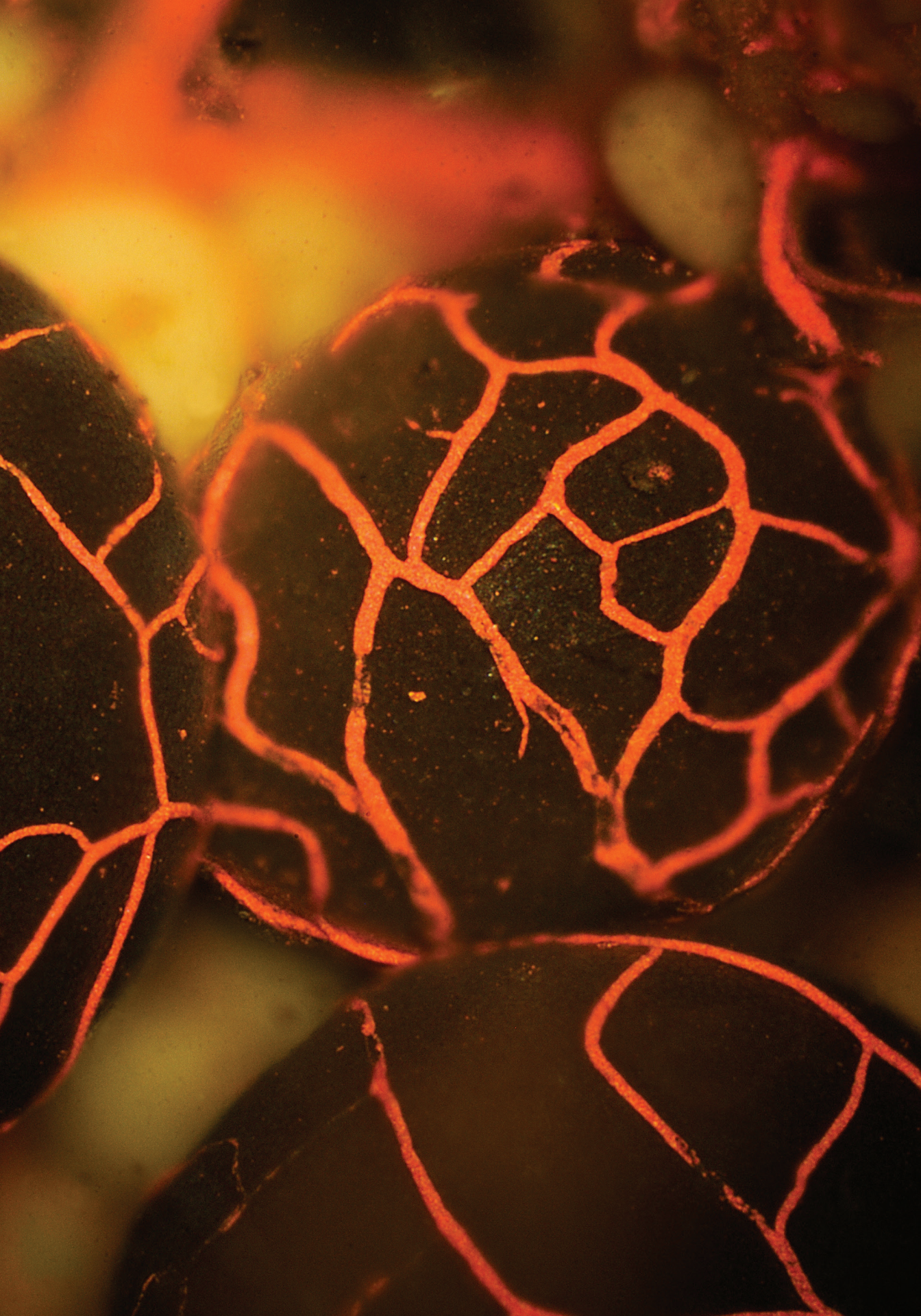
You must teach this simple meditation to your children, and together the entire family will learn much about the Gods of our religion. It will inspire one and all to read more about them, to study their stories and memorize their sacred chants. The Gods will come to life within your own mind and every member of the family as you penetrate behind the symbols and the stories and discover the true nature of Divinities. It is not necessary to practice this meditation for extended periods. A few minutes each day is enough. Once your brief meditation is finished, sit quietly in His *darśana* and enjoy His energies merging with your own *prāṇic* radiations. Take that *darśana* and that love out of the temple when you leave, spreading it among all the peoples of the world that they, too, may come to know and love the endearing God of Hinduism.



CHAPTER TWO

Letters from Lord Gaṇeśa

Toad Egg Gautier



ॐ गं गणपतये नमः

Letters from Lord Gaṇeśa

Śrī Gaṇeśasya Patrāṇi

श्रीगणेशस्य पत्राणि

BLESSINGS FROM A GOD OCCASIONALLY COME TO SEERS ON EXTREMELY auspicious days in the form of direct communication. Such esoteric messages are *śruti,* that which is given directly by the Gods. Through the grace of my satguru, Śiva Yogaswami Āsān, the vision here transcribed occurred to me in the early 1970s while I was looking intently through the clairvoyant ājñā chakra, the third eye, near the site of an ancient temple where Kauai's Wailua River merges with the North Pacific Ocean, where the Hawaiian priesthood invoked Gaṇeśa by the name *Lono* many hundreds of years ago. In my amazement I began to discern golden letters written on a great scroll in the *ākāśa.* They became clearer and clearer, until I was able to read them to a scribe. The three scrolls, revealed as letters from Lord Gaṇeśa, are released here for you to share. They are unique messages of mystical philosophy, phrased in cadenced prose. Reading them carefully, we may gain a deeper understanding of how this great God looks at us and at the physical world.

The First Letter from Lord Ganesha

Glitter, glint and gleam your temples.
Clean them well. These are the twinkle
that is seen by those who do not see.
Guard the gilded throne of Siva's stall.
Keep it well lit and open. No night
doth fall upon His Holy Form.
He is the Sun, both cold and warm.
Piercing vision of deep, inner spinning
wheels pierces through
the twinkle and the clinkle of
your temple Ferris wheel.
These enjoy the darshan flooding out. Those caught in
chain-like discs of darker hours see only glitter and the flowers.

When we come, as puja calls, we hardly see those
who cannot see. We see those who can, clear and
crisp, their wasp-like form in the temple,
they adorn lovingly the floors.

I tell you this, Saivite brahmin souls,
have no fear to shine the sparkle all the year.
Gild the gilded forms anew so that your temples
appear just built. Appeal to every chakra wheel;
one spins one and then the other.

Gild—the base, the rudder, the anchor of it
all—doth stimulate. And sound, the one that
hears. Smell, the controller of the glands.
And so, when chakras spin all through,
your temple will be always new.

Once you realize that some see, and others do
not condescend to kneel, but stand and look
with open mouth as sight and sound rush in along
with drainage from the bath, be not afraid to
open wide the door. Those who enter will
eventually prostrate on the floor.

Keep it clean, and gild and glint anew.
That is your job, what you have to do.

Love,
Lord Ganesha

The Second Letter from Lord Ganesha

Keep track of your paces, for your walk makes marks. Each mark is a reward or a stumbling block. Learn to look at the step you have made and the step you have not made yet. This brings you close to Me. I'm not doing anything. If I were any place, I would not be. You are someplace, doing something. You are not.

Insofar as this is a fact, there then is some semblance of Me in you. If you are not what you apparently are and you keep track of your paces fore and aft in your mind, the karma balancing out the dharma is nothing.

Always live as nothing, and your mission is fulfilled immediately. You do not have to live long, but live well while you live. Be sum total at any point in time.

The mind through which you think you travel,
or of which you think you are, is not.
The awareness of which you think doth travel,
or which you think is aware, is not. Therefore, what is?

That is a mystery, to the mind, to awareness, but can be solved by you and Me coming close together. Let's do it now.

Love,
Lord Umaganesh

The Third Letter from Lord Ganesha

Softness comes when you
are precise, concentrated,
with a sense of penuriousness.
The concentration of the intellect
comes from a vast, expansive ability
accrued which has brought an intricate
intellect into usage. Softness, therefore,
and a demure countenance and
approach to life and associates
must be accrued through these means.

If you are not soft in your intellect toward others,
refrain from speaking as well as thinking.
For the true intellect is accrued from within oneself,
and by listening to your guruji, who stimulates
the within of you for this to occur.

Obedience is the keynote here, and the ravaging forces
of emotion are rejected. And I dismay as you retreat
into the devilish worlds in the plane beyond My sight.
I sit waiting for your return.

Because I am here, it all exists.
The pole holds the feathers that dance in
the wind of desire around it.

Therefore, the thing that we seek is
countenance, precision and self-effacement.
You know the rest. I wait for your return.

See Me first before each advent into another Lord.
I am the gatekeeper, the Mother that cares for you
and makes you just right for the Father.
I am the now that makes you ready for the then.
I am the dragon that scares away the untimely events

in your life due to the ignorance
within your dharma.

I am the innovation of your karma,
if you come to Me, My Being, your Being,
when you get here, now.

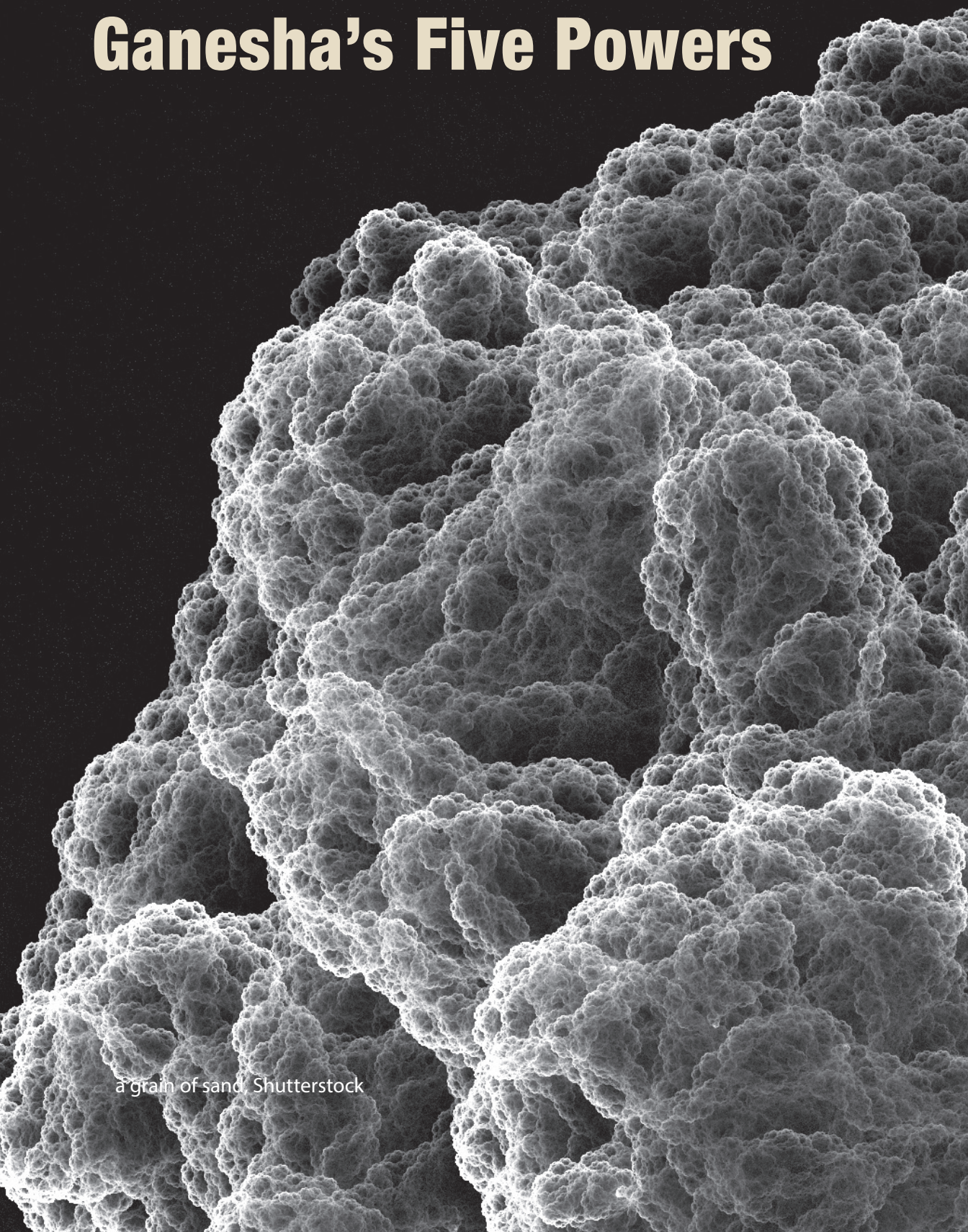
See to this. I command you. I implore you.
I do puja to you by ringing My little bell in front
of Me, by eating a ball-like sweet goody and by
lighting the fire of Siva, My Father, in My Father,
through My head, burning at the top of My head,
your head, burning there, a flickering flame
burning there on nothing except the dross forces
of your dharma; the accumulation of your karma
of this life, burns away the top of your head,
My head, Our head.

Success on the path is assured for you who have
the good fortune to hear, to see, to read or to
have been told to this message, is blessed by your
good fortune, is in tune with Me, your Self; and I
introduce you to realms beyond your limited
vision at this very moment.

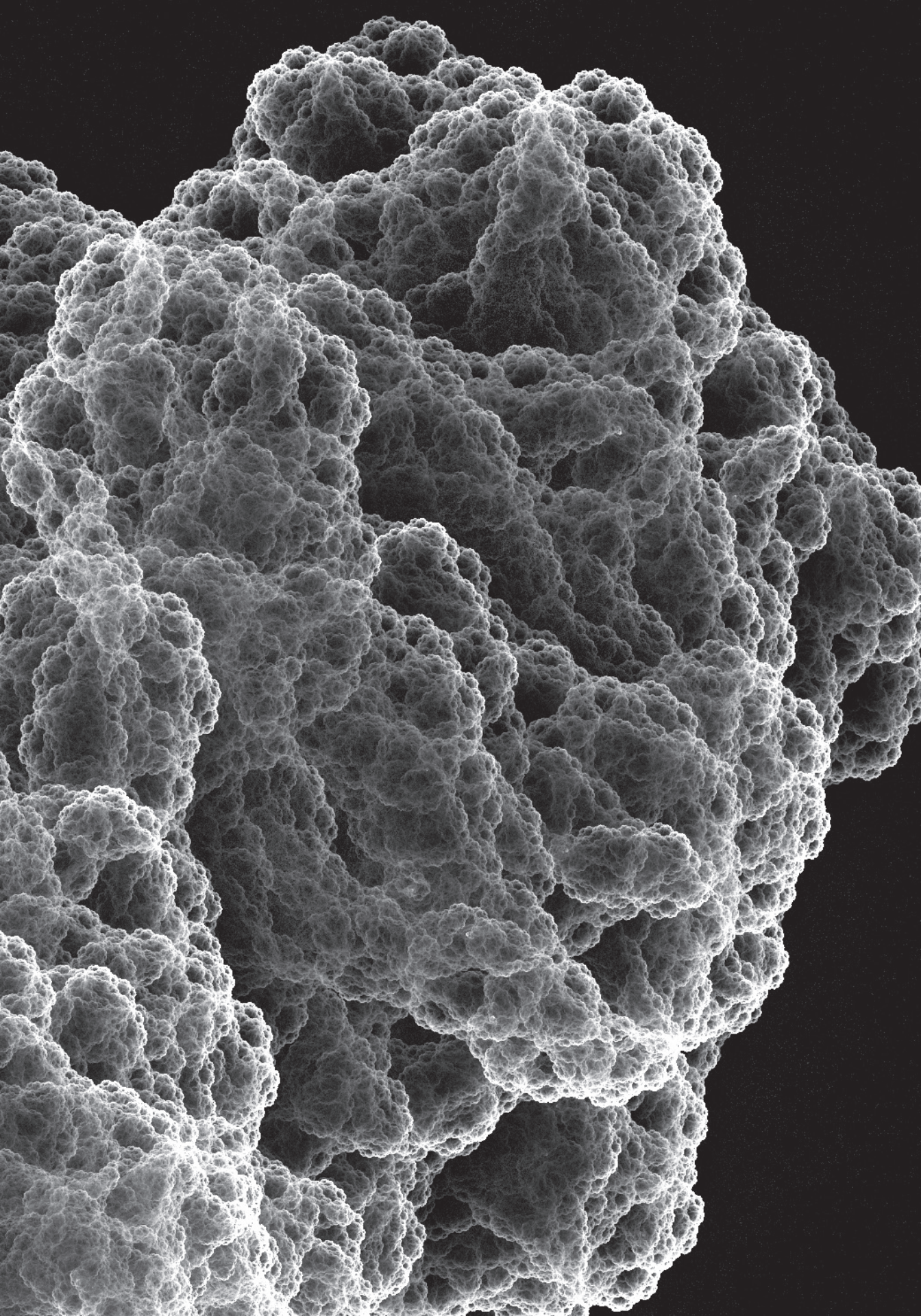
Love,
Lord Ganesh

CHAPTER THREE

Ganesha's Five Powers



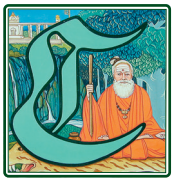
a grain of sand. Shutterstock



Gaṇeśa's Five Powers

Śrī Gaṇeśasya Pañchaśaktayaḥ

श्रीगणेशस्य पञ्चशक्तयः



OME, NOW LET US TURN OUR HEARTS AND MINDS TO THE FIVE POWers of Lord Gaṇeśa. Devotees have asked for elucidation of the five profound ways this Great God functions in helping us from the inner worlds. For many Hindus in both the East and the West it is this understanding of the five powerful positive powers, or śaktis, of Lord Gaṇeśa and their five powerful *asuric* counterforces that makes religion a working part of the devotee's life and a stabilizing force within the extended family—which embraces kindred, friends, community elders and close business associates. This knowledge and practical experience has helped them understand just how intimately Lord Gaṇeśa works with each of us every day in even our mundane life.

There are five great śaktis of Lord Gaṇeśa, as He Himself explained. Their positive vibratory rates can be felt through your astral and physical body and should always be with you. "What is this śakti?" you may be wondering. It is being in the presence of Divinity. All holy men and women emanate all of these śaktis, and you can, too, some stronger than others. Śakti is divine radiation from the Third World through the Second World into the First. The astral body is in the Second World and lives inside the physical body. It is through the astral body that śakti is felt. The śakti comes from the Third World and permeates the astral body in the Second World. This is why the physical body sometimes seems to feel "filled up" with śakti from deep within, permeating out to the inside of our skin. Deeply awakened souls become so filled with the śakti of the Divine that it permeates as cosmic rays out through the skin to the perimeter of the aura, the colorful film of light that surrounds the body. It is felt by other people and attributed as a personal *darśana*.

Thus it can be said that Lord Gaṇeśa has five aspects to His presence. Feeling the presence of the benevolent and beneficent Deity Gaṇeśa everywhere is the exemplary example of what each soul wishes to attain. His five powers could well be called "the feet of the Lord," for it is at these feet that we sit and worship, bringing harmony to our home, among our relatives and friends and business associates, bringing culture, creativity and religion into our life. Crowned by a heartfelt love of God that we then give forth, we are then allowed to perform

charities and, in overflowing abundance, prepare the religious edifices for the next generation. Experiencing this personally will take daily meditation.

THE FIRST ŚAKTI

The first śakti emanates the feeling of love and compassion that the good person naturally has for his or her immediate family. Love and harmony within the nuclear or joint family is most important to all Hindus, and the beautiful feeling when it exists is the first śakti of the Lord. If love abounds in the home and virtue prevails, the home is perfect and its end fulfilled.

THE SECOND ŚAKTI

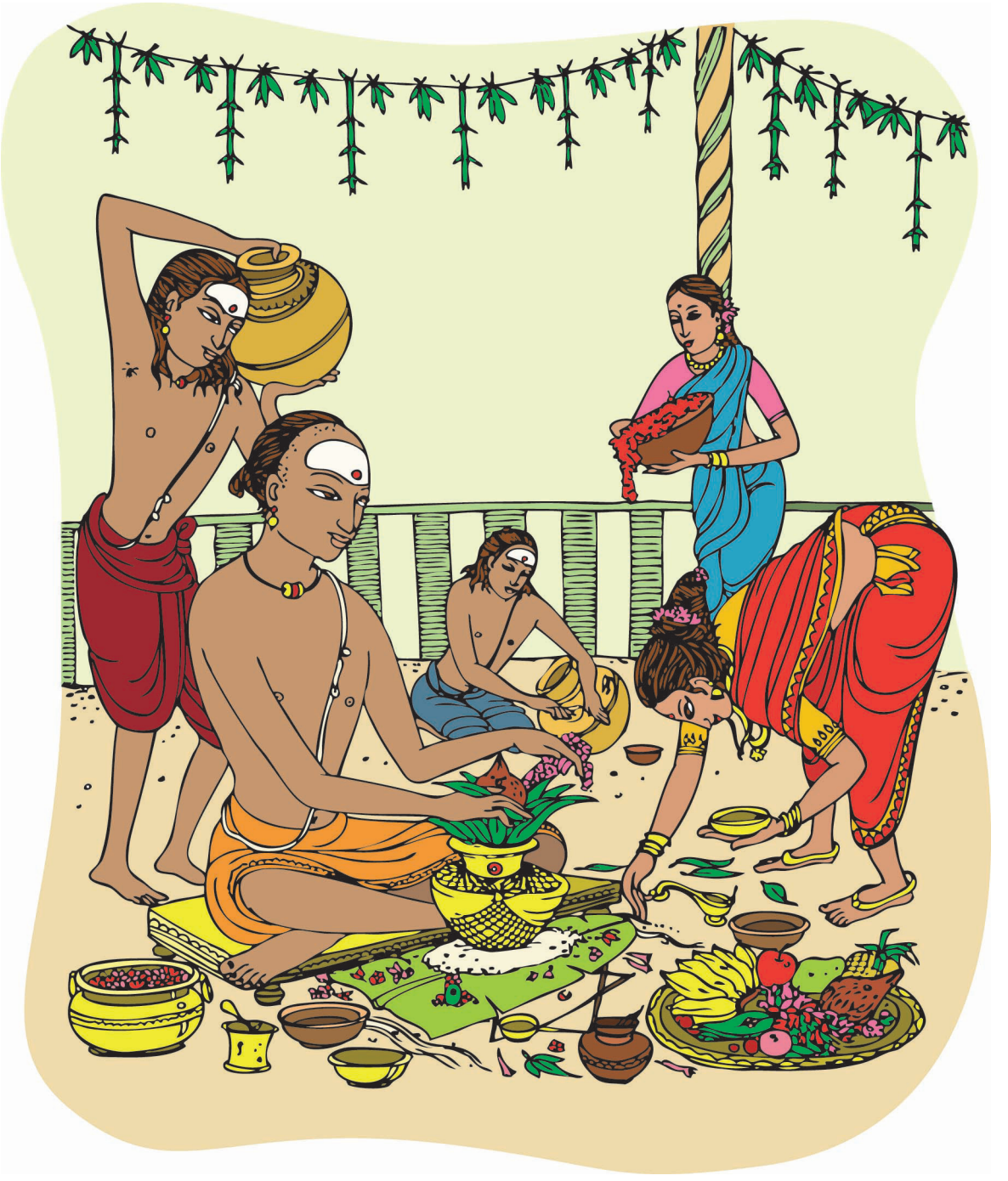
The second śakti is the same feeling but extended to relatives, neighbors and friends, all who are part of the extended family. This is more difficult to hold, as inharmonious conditions often arise. These are called *asuric* forces, which come between people, causing misunderstanding and upsets. Through prayers and through worship, the first śakti can be extended beyond the circumference of the immediate family to include acquaintances, relatives and friends. When this vibration of harmony is felt, all the power of the Lord is with you, as the first śakti and the second śakti merge, bringing in abundance the onrush of the third śakti.

THE THIRD ŚAKTI

The third śakti of Lord Gaṇeśa is this same love extended to all persons one has dealings with in the external world: business associates, a casual merchant and the public at large. It is honest and harmonious relationships in conducting the business of trade and dealings in goods, finance and the distribution of the wealth of the world. This is a most important vibration to be felt, and constantly felt. This śakti of the Lord is tenuous to hold onto, for worldly and materialistic forces, as you well know, militate against this kind of harmony. But once these lower powers are conquered, worries cease, concerns are alleviated and heartfelt joy comes. Such is the grace of loving Gaṇeśa. As the *Tirukural* (120) declares, "Those businessmen will prosper whose business protects as their own the interests of others."

THE FOURTH ŚAKTI

The fourth śakti is an outpouring from having held fast to the first three. It is a combination of the first two śaktis, stabilized by the third. The fourth śakti of Lord Gaṇeśa brings through the creative-intuitive mind—the love of culture



and all that it brings, religious formalities and the respect and appreciation of discipline. Here we find the vibration of religion, which brings as a boon creativity in music, art, drama and the dance. It is through these refining rays that religious life is adhered to and congested forces are braided together in a harmonious pattern for a glorious future. It is through the fourth śakti that religious practices are performed consistently and the refinements of the past are carried into the future. It also extends to devotion toward one's ancestors and all forms of positive community participation.

THE FIFTH ŚAKTI

The fifth śakti of Lord Gaṇeśa is the combination of the first and the third in vibration, and it extends into the wonderful feelings obtained by the outpouring of love of this God. Loving Lord Gaṇeśa with all your heart and soul is the combined merging of these five śaktis. This gives the added boon of being able to be charitable; for those who love God perform charity, build shrines and temples and participate in the overflowing generosity from their resources, earning abundant *puṇya,* fine merit, accrued for this life and passed on to the next. We can see that harmony within the immediate family and harmony extended to all business associates creates the spiritual dynamic within the individual and the group to burst forth into loving this benign God and receiving His material, emotional, intellectual and spiritual abundance.

The Hindu soul who is immersed in the love of the Lord of Obstacles knows he is not the giver, but only the channel for the giving. He is intuitively aware of the māyā of his existence, yet acutely aware of the necessity of sharing his natural, blissful state of having become one with this Lord through the first five śaktis. Such a devotee is the pillar of the temple, the protector of the *sādhaka,* the respecter of the priesthood and the obedient slave to the holy scriptures, and is seen by all as the compassionate one. Being free in mind, emotion and body, the family that lives basking in the five śaktis of Gaṇeśa performs daily pūjā and yearly pilgrimage while upholding the five obligations, the *pañcha nitya* karmas, of the Hindu with joyous ease.

THE SIXTH, SEVENTH AND EIGHTH ŚAKTIS

You may be wondering what lies beyond these first five vibratory rates. Three more śaktis are yet to be unfolded, which we shall do here but briefly.

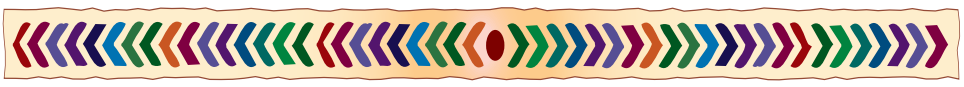
The sixth śakti, entrusted to Lord Murugan, is that of rāja yoga, the awakening of the kuṇḍalinī, which should never be attempted until the first five vibratory rates of the Lord have been maintained and are a natural part of one's

life. The sixth śakti is only felt in yogic meditation, when the crown of the head becomes the temple—the high-pitched "eee" tone ringing within it like a temple bell, and the kuṇḍalinī awakened, the camphor light aglow. The yogī thus locked in his own yoke finds himself seated on the fifth śakti, supported by the lotus petals of the other four. In his state of yoga, he then merges into jñāna; and answers to his deepest philosophical questions come crystal clear as the seventh śakti penetrates the *ākāśic* ether of his mind.

The seventh śakti is the great ray of the giving forth of spiritual teachings from the brink of the Absolute, at which point Lord Śiva and His son Lord Murugan merge. This great śakti is held by the ṛishis and the saints of our religion. Lord Murugan Himself is the preceptor of all of our religion. The seventh and eighth śaktis are the Śiva-Śakti, the great dance of creation, the eighth being that outpouring power felt when mind collects itself when it comes out of the Self, the Absolute, and then forms into manifest knowledge: the seventh śakti.

We shall not concern ourselves now with the sixth, seventh or eighth śaktis, for we are to meditate on and bring through the rays of the first five śaktis through the worship of Lord Gaṇeśa. These five śaktis form the basis for all of the religions in the world, though usually not in their entirety. What we call Gaṇeśa worship today is actually the age-old religious pattern performed through eons of time and found in some form in each of the eleven religions of the world and in the multitudes of faiths. The height of religious experience in many religions is to uphold these five śaktis for society to survive and flourish. And this is basically the extent of most of the world's religions; for once religion is secured in one's life, rāja yoga—finding the temple within, going into that temple, merging within the sanctum sanctorum with the Supreme Lord Himself, the father of the great God Gaṇeśa—is the next and most natural unfoldment.

The Hindu who takes such steps into the realms of Lord Murugan, God of all yoga, son of Śiva, can rely upon the firm foundation of the first five śaktis, which are maintained within him through his personal association with Lord Gaṇeśa. Thus, if he falters in his practice of yoga, he does not fall into an abyss. One who does not have the five śaktis firmly established in life should not perform the more rigorous yogas, lest he awaken and invoke the *asuric*, antagonistic forces of the lower worlds which have the power to counteract and nullify all of one's previous positive efforts.



Sealing off the Lower Realms

The higher one climbs toward the summit of Truth, the deeper the abyss that lies below, should he stumble and fall from the path. What happens when seekers on the path lapse and detour into lower worlds of contemptuous behavior toward themselves as well as others? Low self-esteem, loneliness, fear, unfounded guilt and remorse all are symptoms of the abyss of consciousness so feared by devas and humans alike, and described in scripture and protected against by spiritual preceptors. It is plain to see that the doors of the chakras below the *mūlādhāra* must be firmly closed, sealed off, before serious yoga practice is sought for or performed.

The Five-Fold Abyss

What is the abyss? It is the way of *adharma* and the fate of those who neglect religious practices or fall from any vows they may have taken along the way. There are five abysses, and they are the exact opposites in vibration to the first five śaktis so carefully guarded by Lord Gaṇeśa.

THE FIRST ABYSS

The first abyss is inharmonious conditions within the home, fighting and squabbling among those who are near and dear to each other. This makes strong *saṁskāras,* or scars, in the subconscious mind and begins to create a subconscious that opposes any kind of furtherance of religious life. The first, therefore, is the deepest abyss and the most difficult to rise out of.

THE SECOND ABYSS

The second abyss is inharmonious conditions and misunderstandings—allowed to exist without apology, recompense or forgiveness—between acquaintances, friends and relatives not living in the immediate home. It is easier to scale the walls of this abyss; it takes a little humility to do so, some understanding and kindness. Lord Gaṇeśa is expert in retrieving souls who invoke His guidance, for He is a Mahādeva who could well be called the master of the conscious and subconscious states of mind. Therefore, Hindus go to Him in all worldly matters. This *asuric* force, propelled by entities of the lower astral, is one which stimulates deteriorating gossip about family and social relationships outside the home. It could cause a wife to speak ill of her husband to a neighbor. It would provoke the spreading of lies about an individual to ostracize him or her from the community or social set.

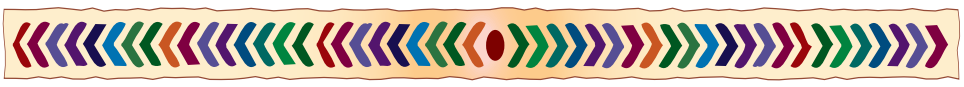
THE THIRD ABYSS

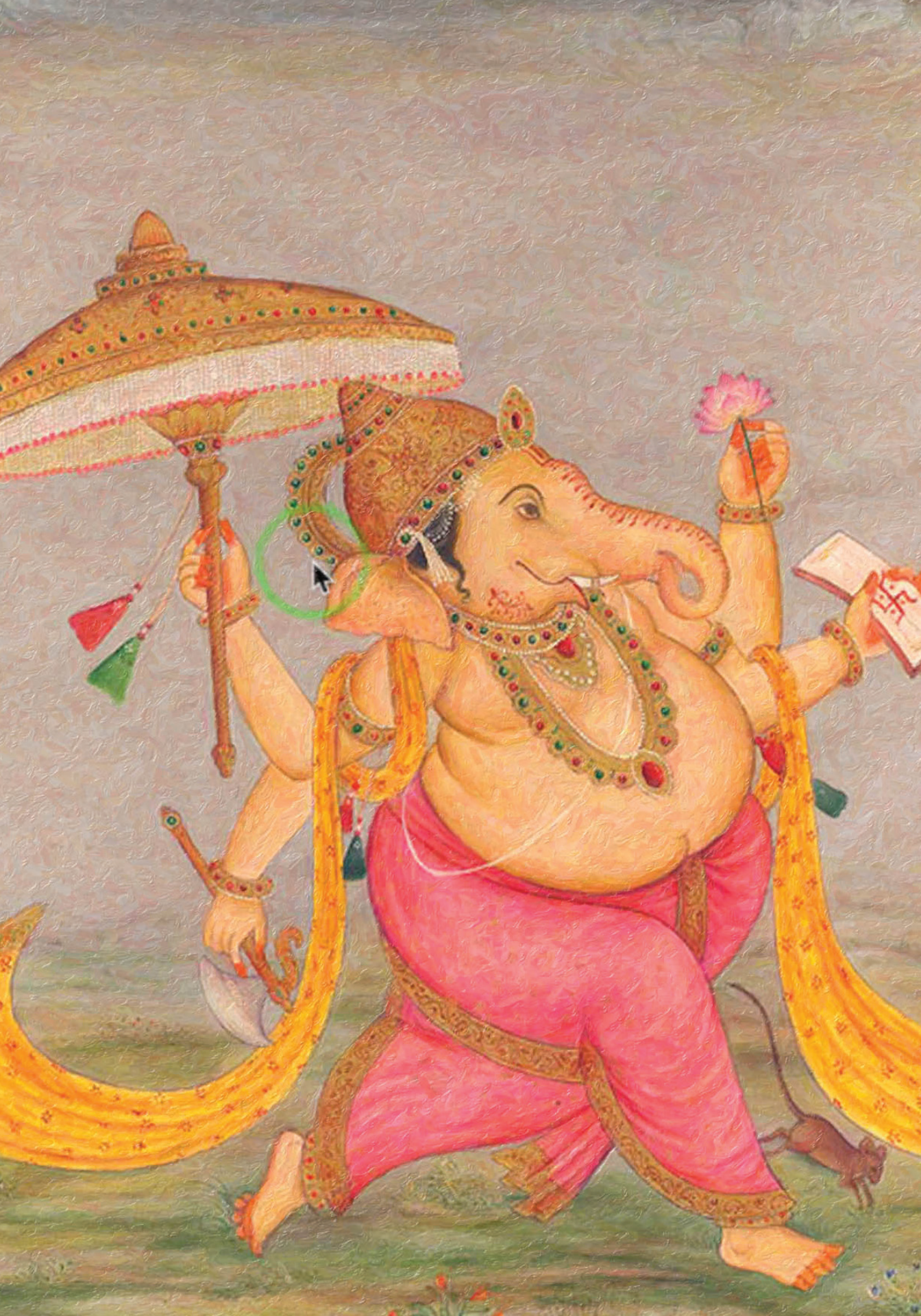
The third abyss is that of worry and trouble. The courts of law handle this one, the collection agencies—and displeased customers. Lack of courtesy in business affairs, the borrowing and the lending of money all together throw their power into making a luscious, comfortable, luxurious abyss of inharmonious conditions within the business world. This *asuric* force stimulates dishonest business dealings, taking advantage of goodwill and trust an establishment has extended. Not honoring commitments when expected is the devilish force that antagonizes. This force also separates people through misunderstanding, causing them to dislike one another. Many people live in this abyss throughout their entire life. It is a welcoming capacious pit that the gravity of desire constantly leads one into. There are many *asuric* people within it to torture as they entertain. However, an escape is available even from this abyss through the careful handling of one's business affairs and consistent religious practice, seeking the help of Lord Gaṇeśa all the way. Within each of these first three pits are *asuric* people on the lower astral plane who aid in distressing the dreams at night; and the vibration within these three abysses is terrible.

THE FOURTH ABYSS

The fourth abyss is a most treacherous one; and even though some may have avoided falling in the first three, they may still find themselves in this one, turning their back on culture, scholarship, serious literature and philosophy, despising music, art, drama and the dance, ridiculing religious people and their practices, content with the libertine, dull, drab life of material things. Sloth and conceit are found here, along with the smug attitudes of those that have the first three śaktis well under control. Here their intellect is God to them; here money is God to them. The reliance on intellect and wealth within this abyss makes it difficult to perceive that someone is there. But being graced with an educated intellect and/or wealth, and perhaps a shallow religious nature, void of deep, heartfelt understanding, the lack of creativity, refined sensibilities and love of God is the key to knowing that, indeed, the fourth abyss lays claim to the soul. This abyss of worldliness could well become the constant fulfillment of desires, one after another, only for the sake of desires and their fulfillment.

This *asuric* force and its representatives on the inner and outer planes, spiritual anacharists and, worse, mercenary terrorists with no desire for a better society, bring the breakdown of religiousness, art, culture and the heritage of the past. In the inner worlds these are well-trained entities, intelligent beings





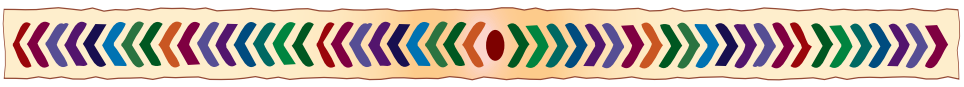
skilled in the black arts, conspiring with human counterparts on the physical plane to bring down the nature of humanity to a base level. They have dedicated themselves to destruction for destruction's sake. If you enter into this abyss and the others, you come under their control and become their pupils. This power breeds promiscuity between the sexes and drains the life of man, bringing him firmly into his animal nature, resulting in loss of conscience. When he loses conscience, he no longer suffers remorse or repents for his misdeeds; and hence an *asuric* culture is born for the many who participate in it. Ancestry is forgotten and the ways of the past are put down, as no one has time to cultivate the refinement and the arts of yesterday, bringing them into today to preserve them for tomorrow.

THE FIFTH ABYSS

The fifth abyss is the dismal condition one experiences when devoid of the childlike spontaneity of spiritual giving, worship and religous service. When this abyss grips and shrouds the soul, it disables him from spontaneous participation in all kinds of religious festivals and events as the opportunities present themselves around the years. The negative vibration felt by the person who feels nothing when he goes to the temple, sees the Deity as a piece of stone or metal, who observes and faults those around him, is as powerful a feeling as that felt by the devotee standing next to him who is moved to tears because of his love of God—this is the mystery of the fifth śakti and its corresponding enshrouding abyss.

Consciously Tuning in to the Five Śaktis

To bring religion into one's life requires the worship of Lord Gaṇeśa and the daily tuning in to these five great śaktis. This worship brings harmony to our home, to our relatives and friends and to business associates. It brings culture, creativity and religion into our life. All this is crowned by such a heartfelt love of God that we can then give forth. We are allowed to perform charities and, in overflowing abundance, prepare the religious edifices for the next generation. This is what our daily pūjās and meditation, our pilgrimages and other religious practices serve to manifest in our lives.



The Five Śaktis of Lord Gaṇeśa

A Reverent Doxology by a Śaiva Paramāchārya

Loving Ganesha! Dear to Siva's men,
Within whose form the world of form resides,
Who earned the mango by a pond'rous ken
And made the moon to wax and wane in tides.

Aum Ganesha! Loved by saints and sages,
Whose skillful arms five potent shaktis wield
To guide men now as in forgotten ages—
The seeker's shield, the farmer's fertile field.

Aum! Ganesha's first shakti is home life,
Protection, harmony, fertility—
Respect becomes the man, as love the wife,
Obedience their cherished offspring's glee.

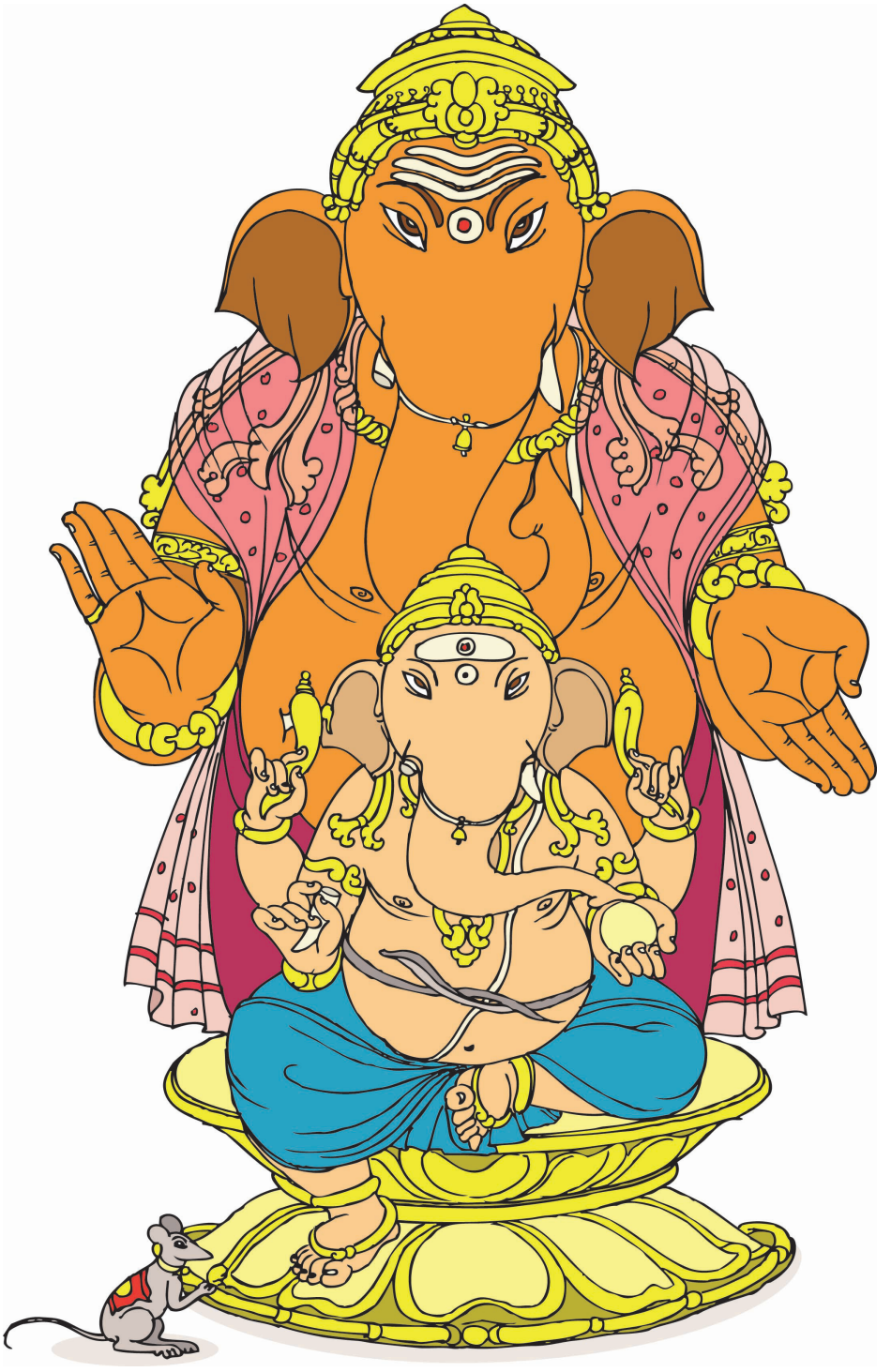
Aum! Ganesha's second shakti's family—
By blood, by marriage and proximity.
Word and thought controlled, like minds agree,
While faithful friends preserve community.

Aum! Ganesha's third shakti's the market,
Where commerce earns the Earth stability,
Where forthright, selfless merchants, free from debt,
Conceive, produce, exchange prosperity.

Aum! Ganesha's fourth shakti brings culture—
Refined expression, graceful artistry
In music, dance, in poetry and sculpture
Or common conduct performed consciously.

Aum! Ganesha's fifth shakti is dharma—
Fair merit found in virtue's charity—
Where love of God conquers ancient karma
And Siva's slaves earn grace's rarity.

Jaya Ganesha! Come, our hearts protect
From discord in the home, from strife with friend,
From business misfortune, from art's neglect,
From soul's dark night—these griefs asuric end.



CHAPTER FOUR

In Science and Beyond

Butterfly Wing 10x Charles B. Krebs

In Science and Beyond

Vijñāne Parataścha

विज्ञाने परतश्च

HARMA, SANĀTANA DHARMA, THE ETERNAL FAITH, HINDUISM, IS IN my opinion the greatest of all religions on the planet, not merely because it is the oldest, the root religion from which all others have sprung forth. It is the greatest because it is the most profound and mystical. No other religion offers such insight into the intricate workings of our universe. More importantly, no other religion offers the grace of a God that is within us as well as within all things outside of ourselves, that is both within form as Saguṇa Brahman and beyond form as Nirguṇa Brahman, and that may be known by the devout seeker even in this life. Little wonder that the Sanātana Dharma, the eternal path, has withstood the ravages of time and stands today as the most advanced system of philosophy and devotion on the Earth. It is fully in accord with the advances of 21st-century science, which, in fact, its sages clearly anticipated. Hinduism now stands as the religion of the village community as well as the urban family—an enlightened faith for all men in all times. The single most unifying force within Hinduism is Lord Gaṇeśa, son of Śiva-Śakti, beloved Deity of 900 million Hindus.

To Him we offer our reverent love and praise. It is an incontrovertible fact that Lord Gaṇeśa is real, not a mere symbol. He is a potent force in the universe, not a representation of potent universal forces. Corpulently built, Lord Gaṇeśa is said to contain within Himself all matter, all mind. He is the very personification of material existence. We look upon this physical world as the body of Lord Gaṇeśa. In seeing and understanding the varied forces at work in the physical universe, we are seeing and understanding the powers and the being of Lord Gaṇeśa. There is nothing that happens on this material plane of existence except that it is the will of God Śiva and minutely detailed by His beloved son Lord Gaṇeśa. When this is known, life becomes a daily joyous experience, for we know that all that happens—whether it brings sorrow or happiness, whether we personally wanted it to happen or not, still we know that all that happens—is right and good, for it flowed from the wisdom and benevolent kindness of our loving Gaṇeśa, the gracious Lord of Dharma. This wonderful spirit all Hindus strive to carry into daily life—a complete trust that all that happens is for the best, a full knowing that the Supreme God's will prevails everywhere and that the elephant-faced God is caring for each detail every

minute of every hour of the day. Hinduism is at the heart of science, and yet its understanding of the universe lies beyond the most advanced scientist's conceptualization. Modern science, like the Vedic ṛishis, describes the whole of the universe as energy in one form or another. Matter itself is merely condensed energy, as Einstein's renowned equation $E=MC^2$ proclaims in mystic brevity.

A Meditation on the Gods and Three Forms of Energy

There are three strong forces at work in the universe: gravity, electromagnetism and the nuclear force. On the following pages we offer a meditation comparing these three energies that are affecting our lives all the time to the powers of Lord Gaṇeśa, Lord Murugan and God Śiva. It is a general analogy—not meant to be theologically perfect—humbly offered as an aid to understanding the unique characteristics of the Deities.

Once Lord Gaṇeśa appeared to me as I was slumbering in a half-waking state close to the Kumbalavalai Gaṇeśa Temple in Alaveddy, northern Sri Lanka, in the home of the Chettiar family that adopted me in 1948. He pointed out that the gardener had unnecessarily broken a branch off a tree while pruning, and that this small mishap had immediately affected the whole universe. Such instantaneousness is Gaṇeśa's way, and such enormous scope is His hallmark, as we shall soon see. We can then liken His nature to the force of gravity, as one gravitational pull in one part of the universe affects all other parts of the universe that very instant, no matter how distant. The nine planets in this solar system affect all humans and plants in their interaction, so precise is Gaṇeśa's mind, the Lord of Karma, the Lord of Dharma.

When I was trying to buy the original building for the Sri Subramuniya Ashram in the village of Alaveddy, much opposition was offered from the owners, but finally we prevailed. Soon after, I had an early morning vision in which Gaṇesa was sitting on my knee as the baby elephant, Pillaiyar. With His soft face pressed against my cheek, He said, "We have accomplished the unaccomplishable." I knew then that the building and all that was to go on within it was blessed by His loving grace. This has proven true over the many decades that followed. The doors and windows of my ashram have since opened on all continents, as the devotees who learned of their religion had to join the Tamil diaspora, spreading to nearly all the countries of the world. They now carry forth with great vigor all they learned at our little ashram, keeping it all in practice today as it was so many years ago.

This showed me that if you forge ahead for a good cause, even when all the forces of the universe align themselves against you, including society itself, you

will succeed. It's a little like a great elephant walking through the forest, clearing all barriers for those who follow. Such blessings come to those who follow Gaṇeśa. Slowly the forces will clear, and all benefit from His grace.

Gravitational Force

Tradition describes the entire universe as being contained in Lord Gaṇeśa's big belly. Thus we look upon Him in this meditation as the overlord who holds sway over the material universe, the sum of cosmic mass. And one of His potencies is gravity. Gravity is a mysterious force to the scientist even today. It is the galactic glue that draws and holds larger mass together and gives order to the macrocosm. It is an instantaneous force, so that when one celestial body moves in a remote corner of a galaxy, all other masses throughout the galaxy adjust simultaneously, even though it would take light, at its incredible speed, millions of years to travel the distance. This implies to the scientist what the Hindu knew from the beginning, that space and time are relative concepts and there is a "something" that exists everywhere in the universe at once. Like gravity, Lord Gaṇeśa is totally predictable and known for orderliness. Without gravity, the known galactic systems could not exist. Masses would stray apart; all organization of life as we know it would be impossible. Gravity is the basis of ordered existence in the macrocosm, and our loving Gaṇeśa holds dominion over its mysteries.

Electromagnetic Force

Within and between the atoms that comprise our physical universe there reigns a second force: electromagnetism. Lord Murugan, Kārttikeya, holds sway over the forces which bind sub-atomic particles together. The electromagnetic force is many magnitudes greater than the gravitational force, but because it works in the microcosm of existence, it has less influence on our daily lives than the gravitational force. Similarly, Gaṇeśa is more involved in our day-to-day concerns than is Lord Murugan, whose power is electric, given more to change than to order, more to the unsuspected than to the predictable. Like the powerful forces that bind together the atomic systems of protons, neutrons, electrons, quanta, quarks and other sub-atomic "particles," Lord Murugan's śakti works deeply within us, within our spiritual sphere, within the great depths of the mind. His electric power issues forth from the śakti *vel.* Just as energy races through the universe in the form of radio, radar and light waves, x-rays, heat, gamma and cosmic rays, so does Murugan's electric śakti impact our life. Just as we experience light and darkness, positive and negative potential, so do the

electromagnetic forces issue forth from Murugan's realm of positive and negative forces, of devas and their *asuric* counterparts.

Like gravity, Lord Gaṇeśa is always with us, supporting and guiding our physical existence. And just like electrostatic energy, Lord Murugan is most often invisible, working in a sphere of which we are not always conscious, present in our lives through His radiant energies and light, yet not so apparently known as Lord Gaṇeśa. The ancient *Āgamas* offer a more philosophically technical summary of the above. They declare that Gaṇeśa rules over *aśuddha māyā,* the gross energies of the odic realms from the thirteenth *tattva* to the 36th. Murugan's domain, they state, is *śuddhāśuddha māyā,* the realms of actinodic energy, being the sixth to the twelfth *tattvas.* Finally, they declare that Siva's domain is *śuddha māyā,* the purely spiritual realms of actinic energy, being the first to the fifth *tattvas* in the unfolding of the universe.

Atomic or Nuclear Energy

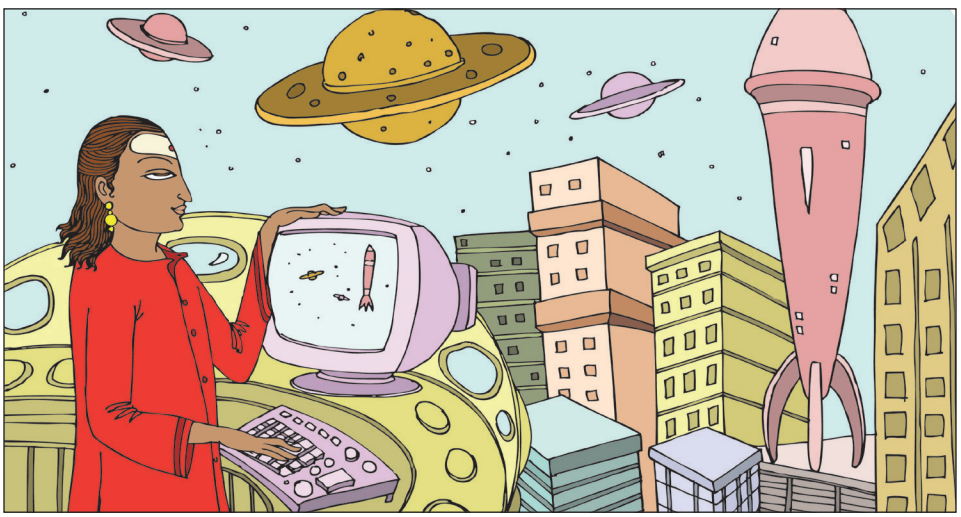
God, Śiva, is the Lord of Lords and the source of all energies in the universe. His is the most interior sphere of all—the nuclear energies within sub-atomic particles and the essence even of that. Of all energies, the nuclear energy is by far the most powerful; and of all the Hindu Gods, God Śiva reigns supreme. At the core of matter, Lord Śiva whirls through His Cosmic Dance as Naṭarāja. Never has a greater conception been seen by seers to describe the divine operations of the universe. We quote from the book, *The Tao of Physics,* by noted physicist and researcher Fritjof Capra: "The dance of Śiva is the dancing universe; the ceaseless flow of energy going through an infinite variety of patterns that melt into one another. Modern physics has shown that the rhythm of creation and destruction is not only manifest in the turn of the seasons and in the birth and death of all living creatures, but is also the very essence of inorganic matter. According to quantum field theory, all interactions between the constituents of matter take place through the emission and absorption of virtual particles. More than that, the dance of creation and destruction is the basis of the very existence of matter, since all material particles 'self-interact' by emitting and reabsorbing virtual particles. Modern physics has thus revealed that every subatomic particle not only performs an energy dance, but also *is* an energy dance—a pulsating process of creation and destruction. For the modern physicist, then, Śiva's dance is the dance of subatomic matter, a continual dance of creation and destruction involving the whole cosmos, the basis of existence and of all natural phenomena. The metaphor of the Cosmic Dance thus unifies

ancient mythology, religious art and modern physics. It is indeed, as Coomaraswamy has said, 'poetry, but science nonetheless.'"

Hinduism's Unsurpassed Cosmology

Hindus may be justifiably proud of a religion which postulated thousands of years ago a cosmology that only today is being discovered and appreciated by science through the ponderous process of reason and empirical proof. Hinduism knew the truth of the source and organization of the universe long before Newton and Einstein confirmed the validity of our world view. While many Western religious systems stand opposed to science or alter their beliefs according to its evolving conclusions, it is one of the great heritages of the Hindu perception of the all-pervasive God, soul and cosmos that we have spiritual Truths that are in complete accord with and cannot be refuted by mode rn science.

When the astrophysicist ponders the expanding and contracting nature of the universe, he is contemplating the Hindu view of existence as the day and night of Brahmā, a non-linear conception of time and space that manifests and then undergoes total absorption in *mahāpralaya,* then manifests again in unending cycles. And when that same theoretical, scientific mind contemplates the end of the cycle of contraction wherein all matter-energy is assembled together, he is contemplating the Cosmic Egg, Brahmāṇḍa, of Hindu cosmology. When high-energy technicians assembled in the 1970s in California to construct the world's largest and most powerful particle accelerator, they went to Swami Muktananda of Ganeshpuri, India, and asked him to name it for them. He aptly named it "Shiva." Hinduism, the Hindu-inspired faiths of Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism and most indigenous faiths offer knowledge and insights to science; religion is once again cooperating with science in the quest for knowledge. No wonder we boldly proclaim Hinduism the greatest religion in the world.



CHAPTER FIVE

Forms of Ganesha

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Forms of Gaṇeśa

Gaṇeśa Svarūpāṇi

गणेशस्वरूपाणि

EVERYWHERE IN THE MACROCOSM IS OUR BELOVED, BENEVOLENT DEITY Gaṇeśa, at every point in time, in the forces of family, community, commerce and dharma that shape our lives, as well as in our culture—indeed all cultures of the world—in the physical universe and within our hearts. Of course, He is most present in the consecrated temple or roadside shrine, from which His grace radiates out from the world of the Gods. Gaṇeśa is the Lord of beginnings, guiding the practical aspects of our lives that we may best fulfill dharma. For the Hindu, Gaṇeśa is easily contacted, and He is thought of as lenient of our errors and shortcomings, most understanding of our humanness. So vast is Gaṇeśa's Being that He cannot be contained by any single concept, and therefore He is portrayed in many forms. He is each of them, and He is all of them.

Gaṇeśa is a word compounded from the Sanskrit word *gaṇa*, meaning "the hosts," "multitudes" or "troops" of demigods, especially the retinue of Lord Śiva under the rule of Gaṇeśa, and *īśa*, "ruler," "lord" or "sovereign." This is virtually synonymous with the name *Gaṇapati,* "master of the hosts." As Gaṇapati, Lord Gaṇeśa is the leader of the *gaṇas,* ruling over the celestial hosts, over the benign as well as the malevolent inner-plane beings. He controls them not as Lord Murugan does, through bravery and forcefulness, but by strategy and intelligence. We follow the path of Lord Gaṇeśa when we resort to discrimination and sagacity to resolve our difficulties, when we proceed past obstacles in a slow, prudent and well-planned manner. Lord Gaṇeśa is not in a hurry. He is cautious. He is patient, willing to await the right time for events to take place.

As Vighneśvara, Lord Gaṇeśa is Lord of Obstacles, creating difficulties and obstructions if the time is wrong for us to proceed and removing those same obstacles when our success is assured. It is to Vighneśvara that we supplicate before we undertake a task, plan a change in our life or begin the worship any of the other Gods.

As Ekadanta, Lord Gaṇeśa is the Single-Tusked One, the Patron of Literature who, when all others failed, Himself undertook to scribe the great epic, *Mahābhārata*, dictated to Him by sage Vyāsa. He offers us here the lesson in life that knowledge and dharma are of utmost importance, worth sacrificing even pride and beauty to attain.

As Siddhidātā, Lord Gaṇeśa is the Giver of Success associated with bountiful harvests and general abundance in life. It is said that Lord Gaṇeśa is the material manifestation of the *manas,* or mind, of Lord Śiva, and that He embodies the five elements—earth, air, fire, water and ether—and guides the elemental forces that produce and maintain order in the universe.

The *Mudgala Purāṇa,* an ancient text on Lord Gaṇeśa, cites eight forms of Gaṇeśa, prevailing over eight human weaknesses or demons. Ekadanta is the Conquerer of Moda, arrogance. Dhumravarṇa (smoke colored) overcomes Abhimāna, pride; Vakratuṇḍa (curved trunk) is the Vanquisher of Matsarya, jealousy; Mahodara (big belly) is Lord of Moha, infatuation; Gajānana (elephant face) conquers Lobha, greed; Lambodara (corpulent belly) overcomes Krodha, anger; Vikaṭa (huge) conquers Kāma, lust; Vighnarāja (King of Obstacles) prevails over Mamatā (egotism).

So now we can see that our loving Gaṇeśa is "there" for even the lowest of the low, that there is hope for everyone, and that there really is "no intrinsic evil," only a seeming variation of the past containing all that has to be learned to live and grow from a young soul to an older one and then mature into ṛishi consciousness. He is "there for us." Yes, there is hope for all, and none is damned forever. It is our loving Gaṇeśa who eventually introduces us to His brother, our loving Murugan, the God Who sits upon the *maṇipūra* chakra, center of willpower.

The Two Śaktis of Lord Gaṇeśa

There is a confusion regarding the two consorts of Lord Gaṇeśa: Buddhi and Siddhi, with whom He is often represented. Buddhi is wisdom, or more precisely sagacity, the intelligent and discriminating use of knowledge. Siddhi is success, or more precisely fulfillment, accomplishment or attainment. While in North India Gaṇeśa is conceived as having two consorts, in the South He is looked upon as a *brahmachārī,* or bachelor. Esoterically, it must be stressed that none of the Gods has a wife. Their consorts are not to be considered as separate from them, but as aspects of their being, as their śakti, or power. The Mahādevas, who live in the inner Third World, cannot be likened to men and women who live on the Earth, known as the First World. They exist in perfectly evolved soul bodies, bodies which are not properly differentiated by sex. They are divine beings made of pure consciousness and light; they are neither male nor female. To better understand these divine Gods, we sometimes conceive of them as being the man if they are strong in expression or the woman if they are gentle and compassionate. In truth, this is a misconception. There are no

husbands and wives in the vast superconscious realms of the Third World, or Śivaloka. Thus, Buddhi and Siddhi are properly seen as the two śaktis—wisdom and success—of the great Gaṇeśa, and not as His so-called consorts. These two represent benefits or boons accrued by His worshipers. In an inner sense, Buddhi and Siddhi are the *iḍā* and *piṅgalā nāḍīs,* the female and male currents, both of which are embodied within the being of Gaṇeśa, corresponding to Vallī and Devayāni, the mythological consorts of Lord Murugan.

The Quiet Within

Our Loving Ganesha's a powerful God
Yet, He is so quiet you might think it odd
That such a meticulous, intricate soul
Would care to guide all of our karma so old.

Indeed it is fortunate that He is so near
For if He were not we would hardly be here,
For He holds the base chakra so firmly in place
That we may thus live in this one time in space.

Pray to Him dearly, and truth you'll be seeing
That the quiet inside is the cave of your Being,
To attain through your striving, to be quiet within,
That the heritage of all happy births you will win.

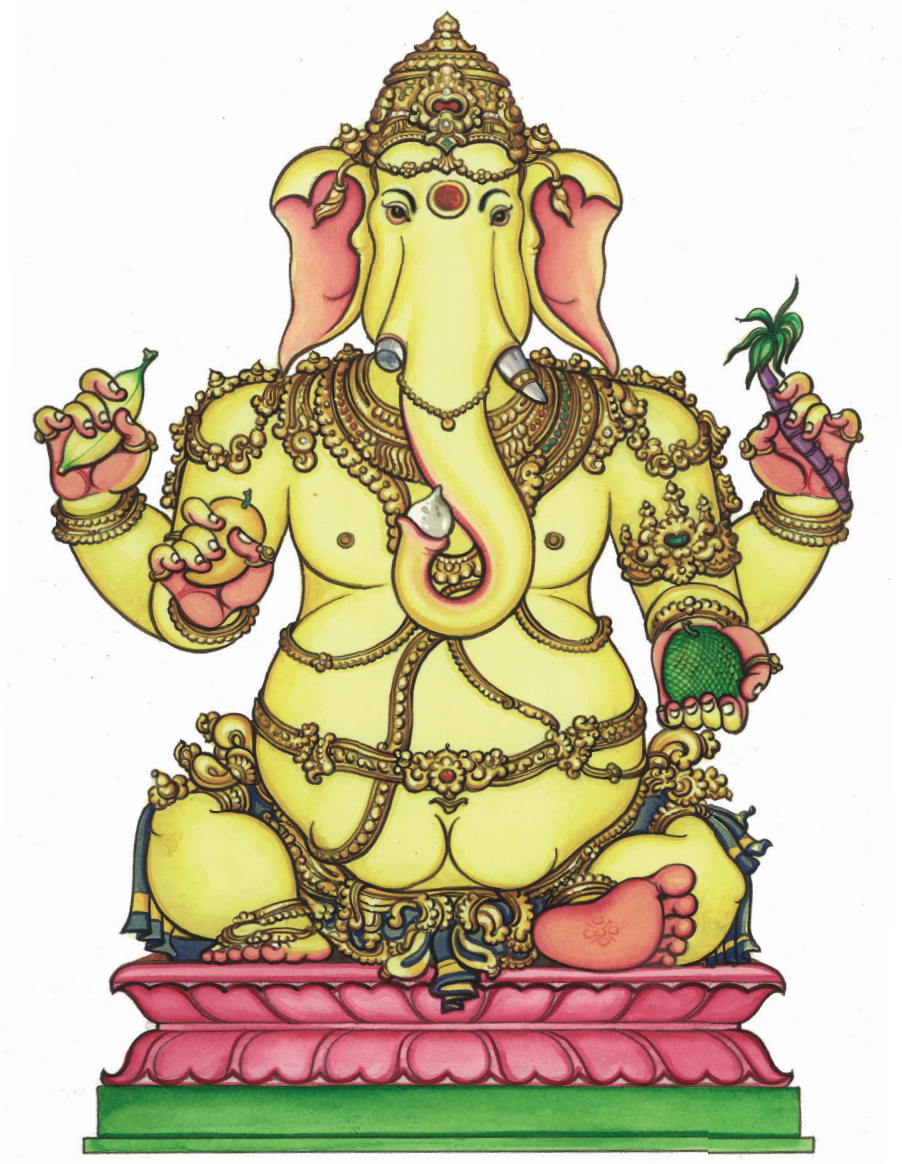
Thirty-Two Forms of Gaṇeśa

In temples and shrines around the planet, from Moscow to London, from Durban to Kuala Lumpur, Gaṇeśa's worshipful image, or *mūrti,* appears in many forms. The *Mudgala Purāṇa,* in addition to the above eight, lists thirty-two. We present sketches here of these on the following pages. It may interest you to know that the first sixteen *mūrtis*, the Shoḍaśa Gaṇapati, are installed in an eight-sided, chariot-shaped structure at the Śrī Śaṅkara Maṇḍapam of Rāmeśvaram, South India, established by the late Śrī lā Śrī Chandraśekharendra Saraswati, 68th preceptor of the Kanchi Kāmakoti Pīṭham.

1

Bāla Gaṇapati

बालगणपति

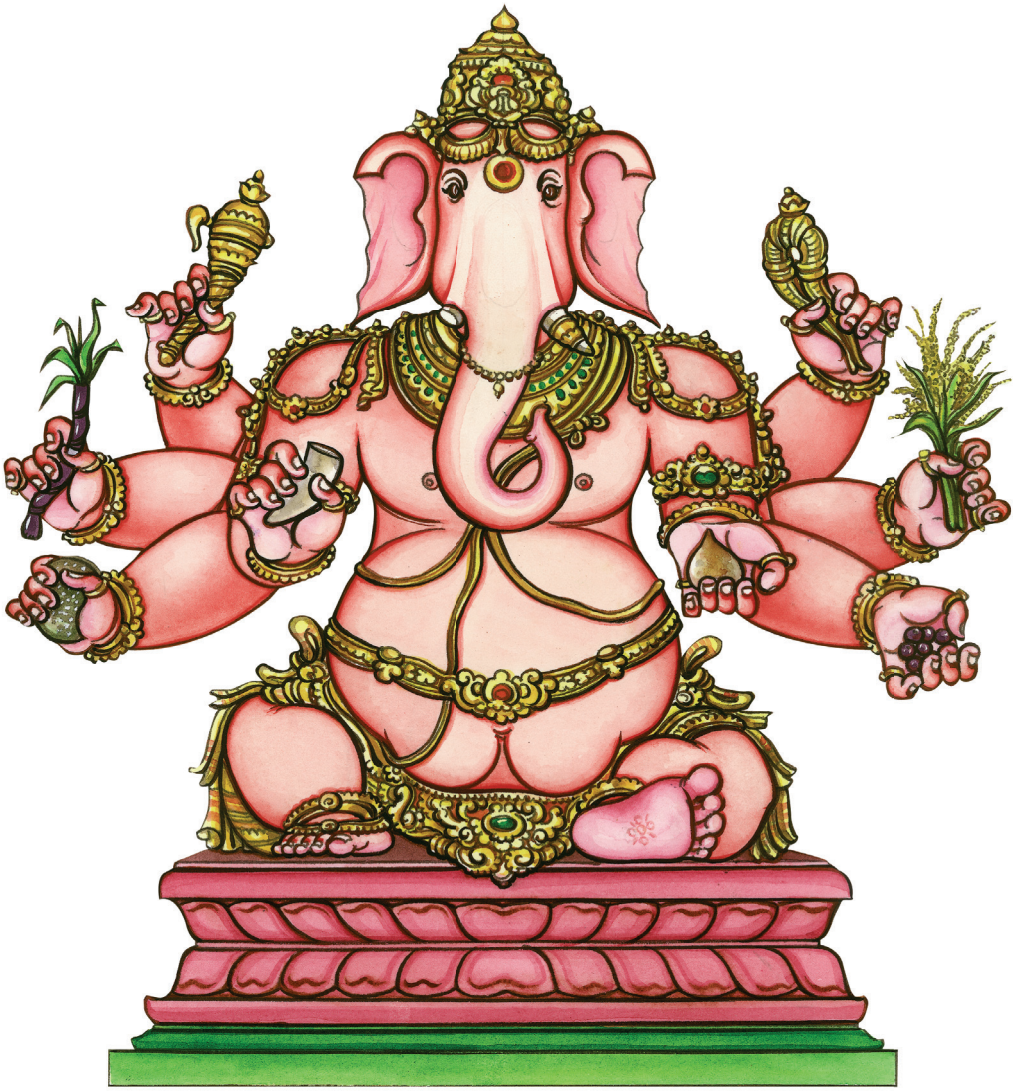


Bāla Gaṇapati is "the Childlike" God of golden hue. In His hands He holds a banana, mango, sugarcane and jackfruit, all representing the Earth's abundance and fertility. His trunk garners His favorite sweet, the *modaka*.

2

Taruṇa Gaṇapati

तरुणगणपति

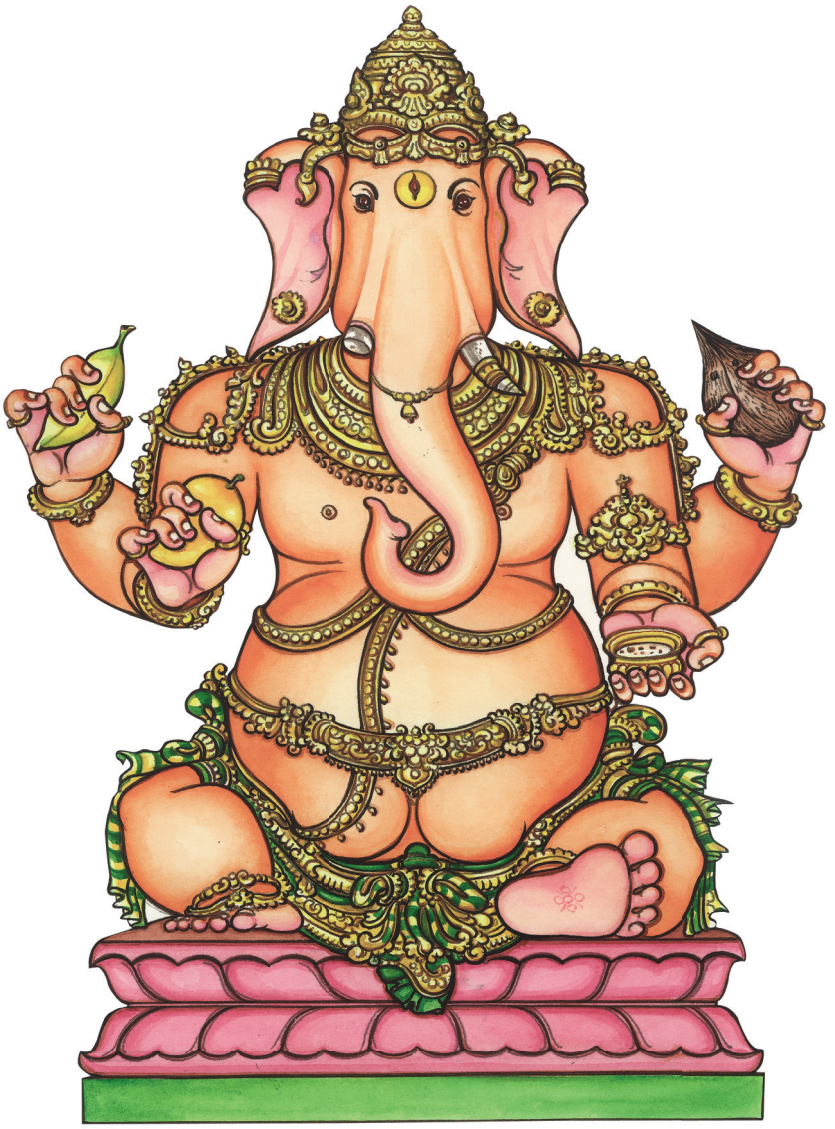


Eight-armed Taruṇa Gaṇapati, "the Youthful," holds a noose and goad, *modaka*, wood apple, rose apple, His broken tusk, a sprig of paddy and a sugarcane stalk. His brilliant red color reflects the blossoming of youth.

3

Bhakti Gaṇapati

भक्ति गणपति

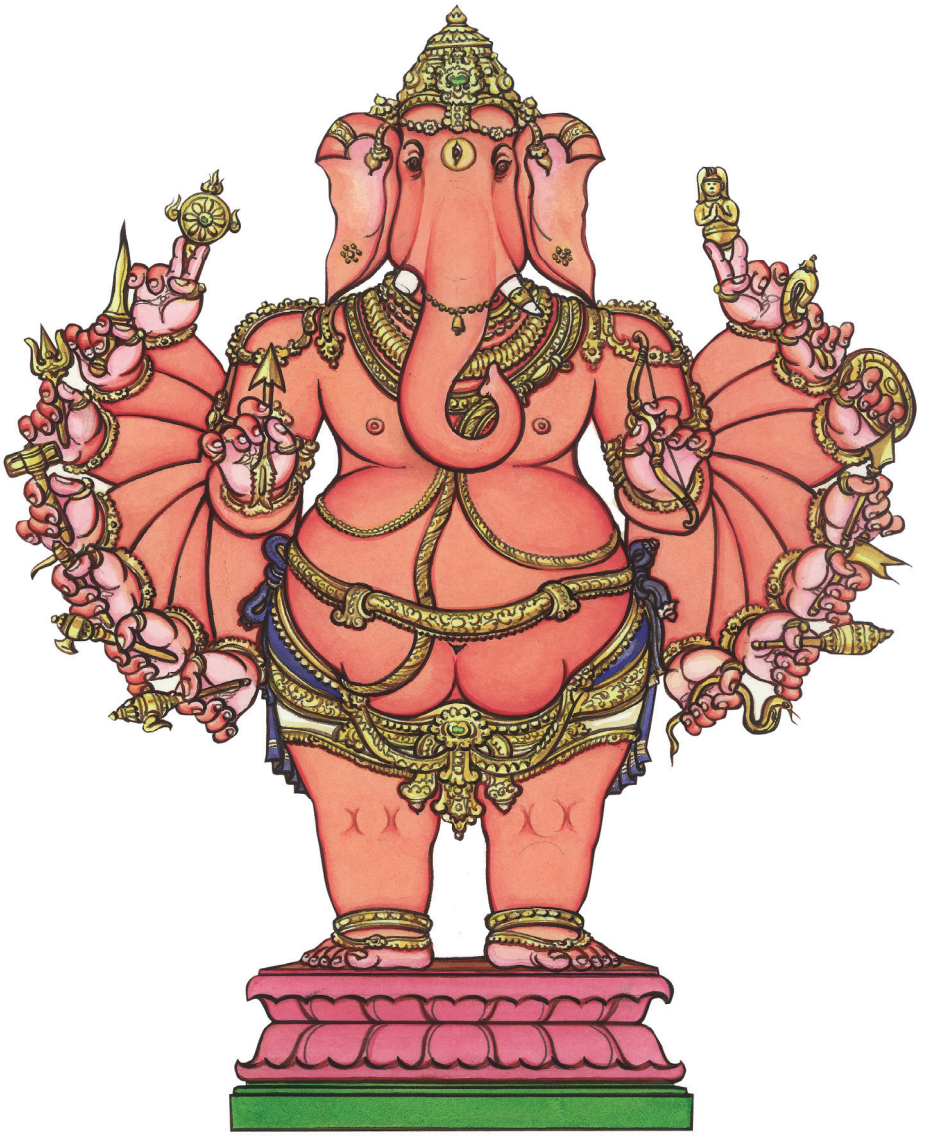


Shining like the full moon during harvest season and garlanded with flowers, Bhakti Gaṇapati, dear to devotees, is indeed pleasant to look upon. He holds a banana, a mango, coconut and a bowl of sweet *pāyasa* pudding.

4

Vīra Gaṇapati

वीर गणपति

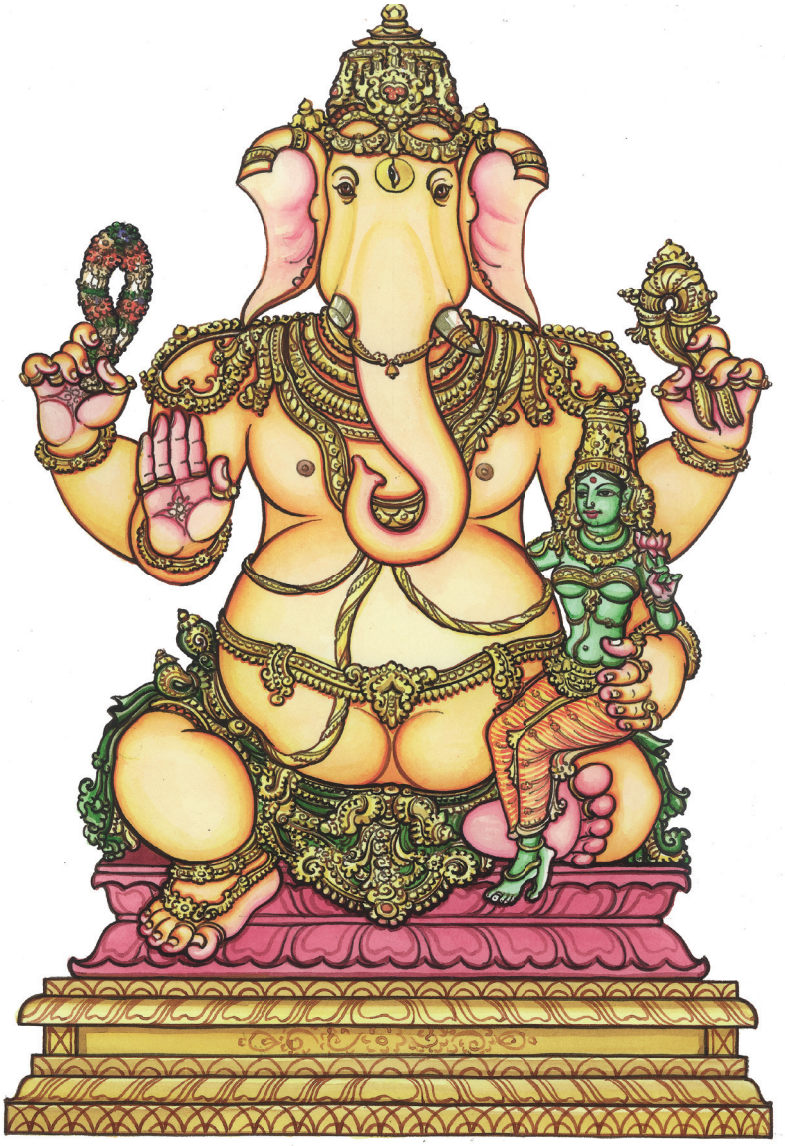


The "Valiant Warrior," Vīra Gaṇapati, assumes a commanding pose. His sixteen arms bristle with weapons, symbols of mind powers: a goad, discus, bow, arrow, sword, shield, spear, mace, a battleaxe, a trident and more.

5

Śakti Gaṇapati

शक्तिगणपति

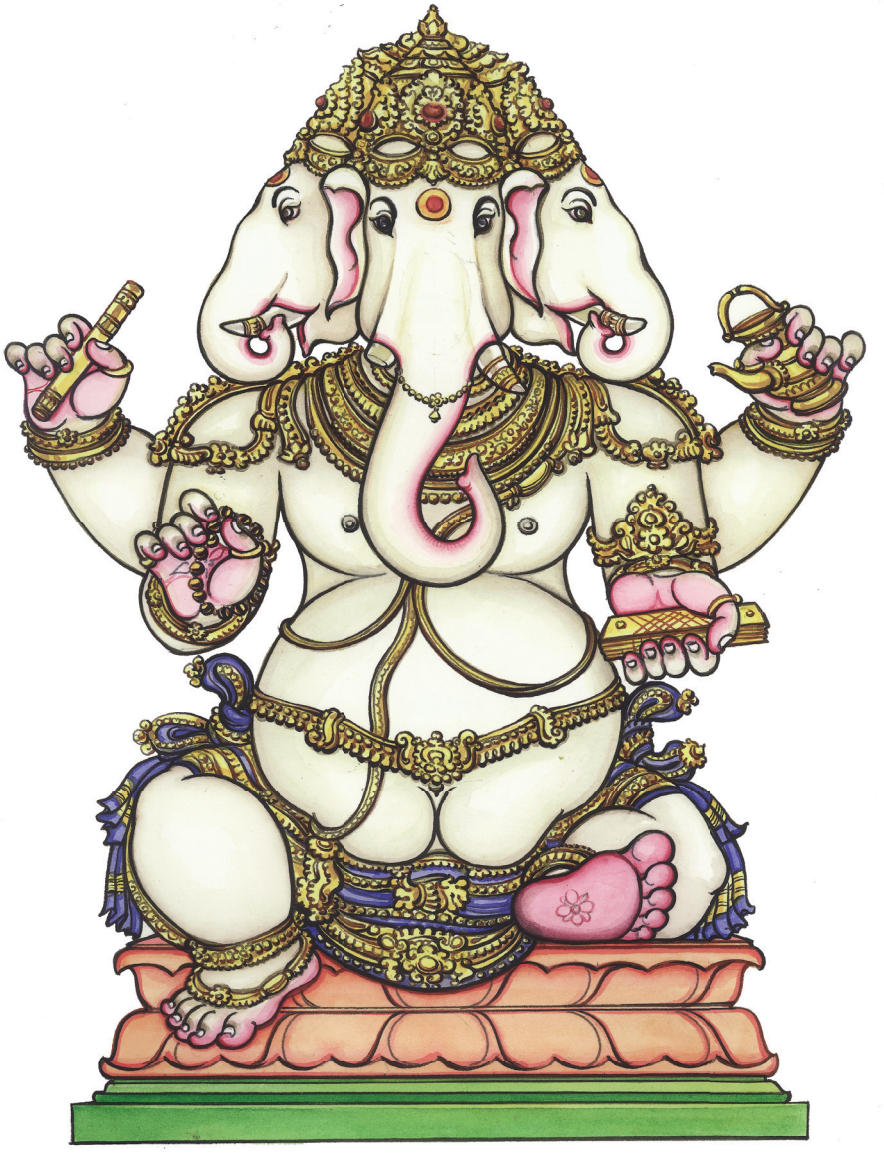


Four-armed and seated with one of His śaktis on His knee, Śakti Gaṇapati, "the Powerful," of orange-red hue, guards the householder. He holds a goad and a garland noose, while bestowing blessings with the *abhaya mudrā*.

6

Dvija Gaṇapati

द्विजगणपति

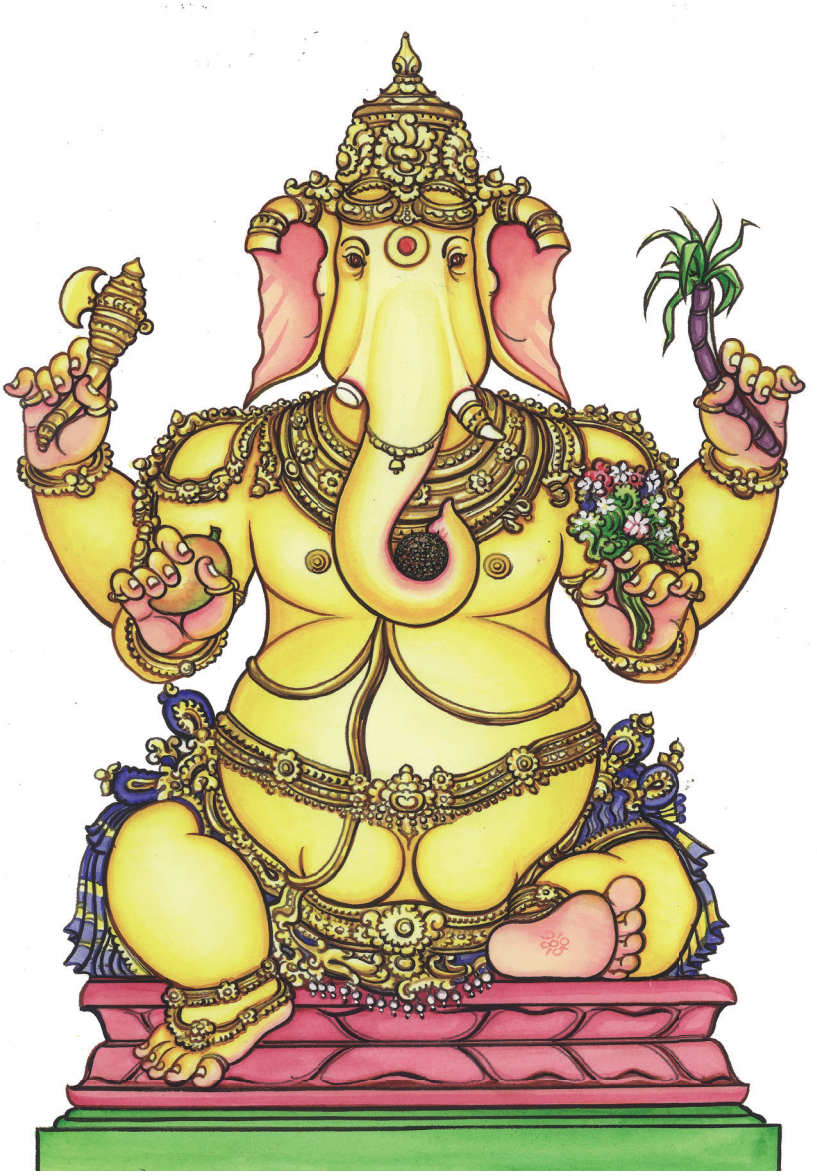


Four-headed Dvija Gaṇapati, "the Twice-Born," is moon-like in color. Holding a noose, a goad, an *ola* leaf scripture, a staff, water vessel and a His japa beads, He reminds one and all of the urgency for disciplined striving.

7

Siddhi Gaṇapati

सिद्धिगणपति

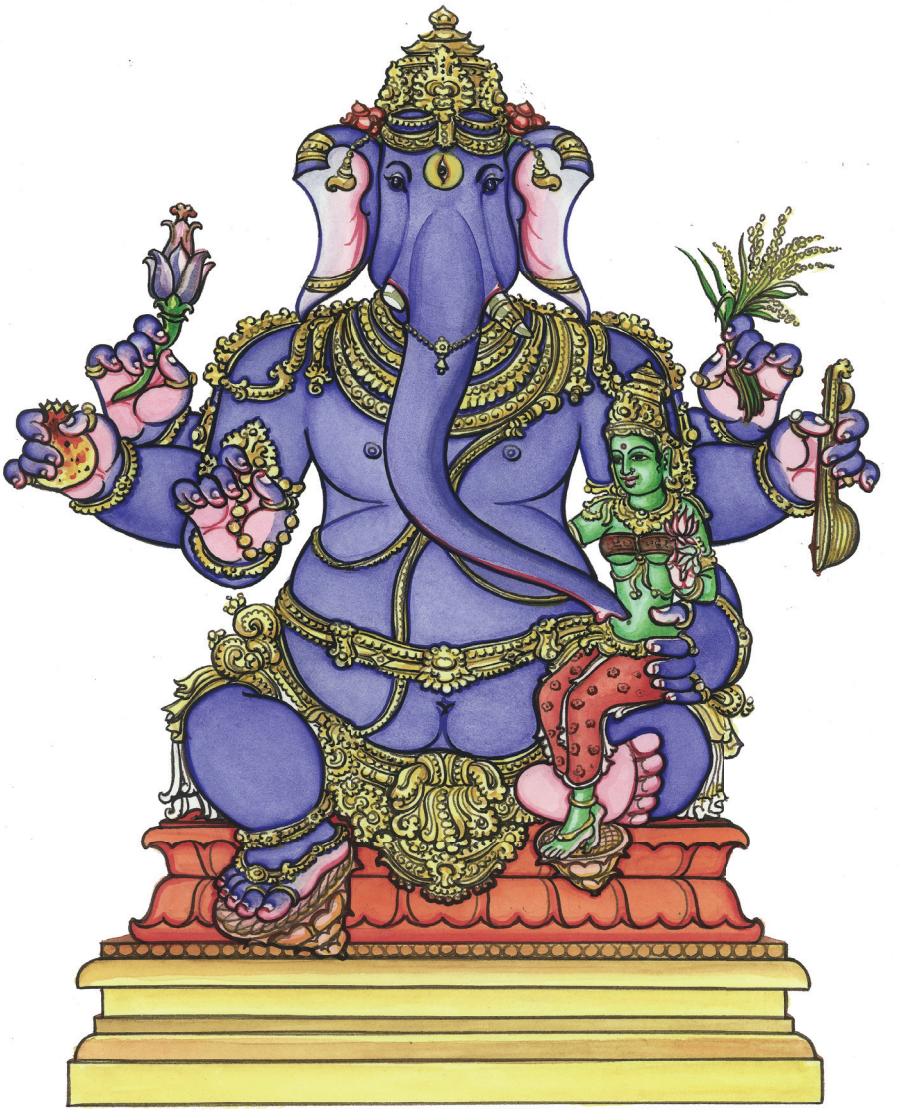


Golden-yellow Siddhi Gaṇapati, “the Accomplished,” is the epitome of achievement and self-mastery. He sits comfortably holding a bouquet of flowers, an axe, mango, sugarcane and, in His trunk, a tasty sesame sweet.

8

Ucçhishṭa Gaṇapati

उच्छिष्टगणपति

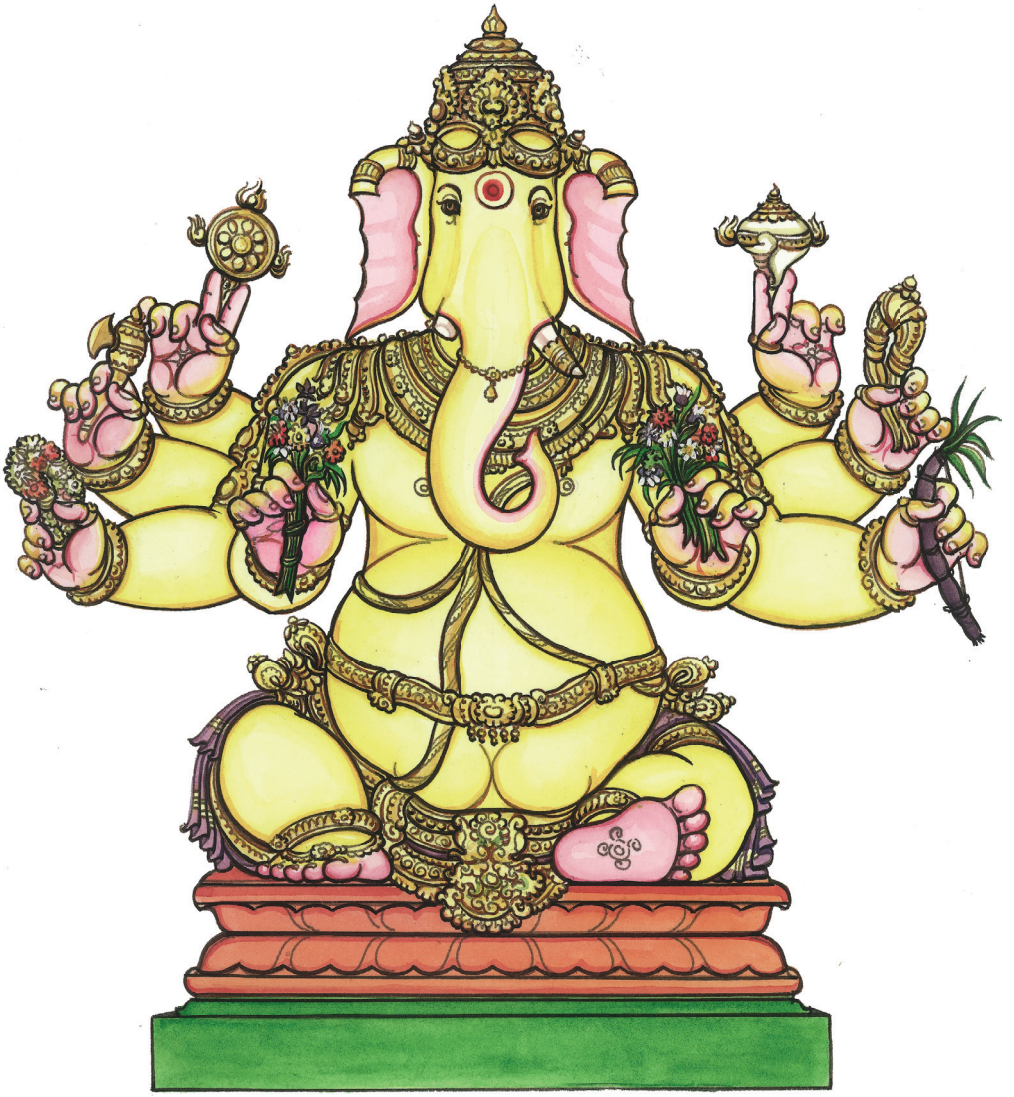


Ucçhishṭa Gaṇapati is "Lord of Blessed Offerings" and guardian of culture. Of blue complexion and six-armed, He sits with His Śakti, holding a vīṇā, pomegranate, blue lotus flower, japa *mālā* and a sprig of fresh paddy.

9

Vighna Gaṇapati

विघ्नगणपति

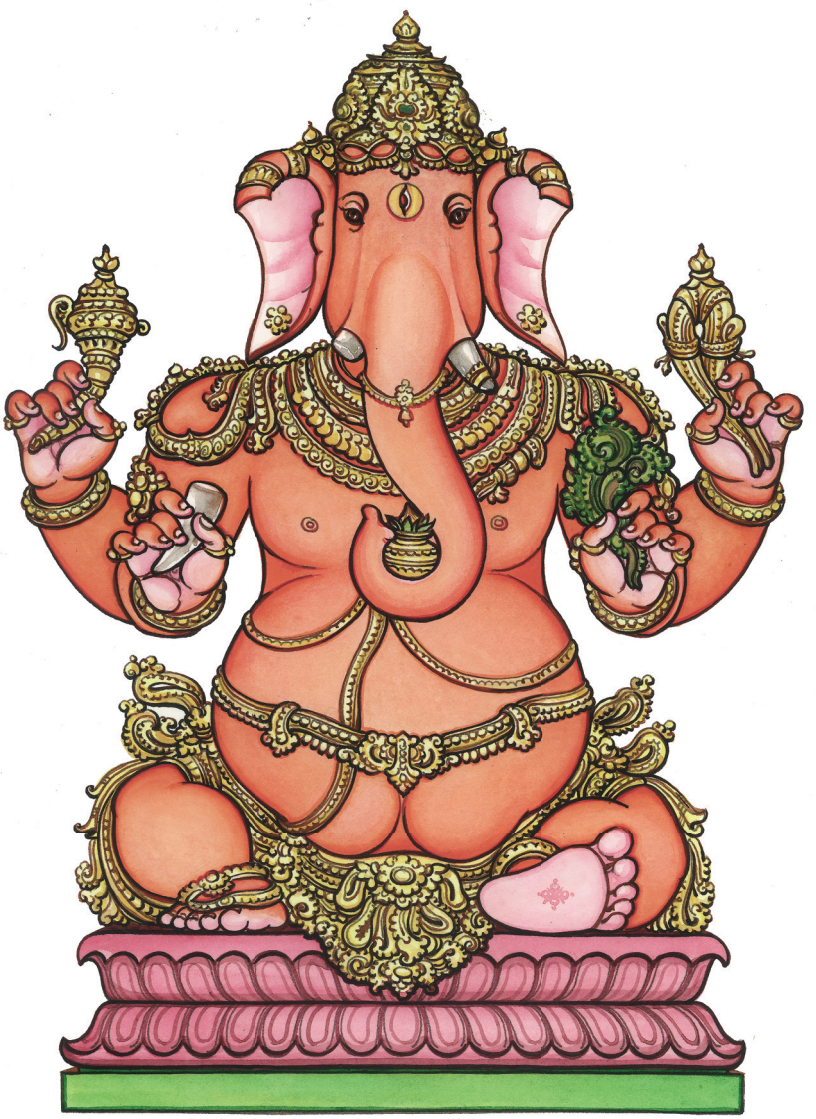


Vighna Gaṇapati, "Lord of Obstacles," is of brilliant golden hue and bedecked in jewels. His eight arms hold a noose and goad, tusk and *modaka*, conch and discus, a bouquet of flowers, sugarcane, flower arrow and an axe.

10

Kshipra Gaṇapati

क्षिप्रगणपति

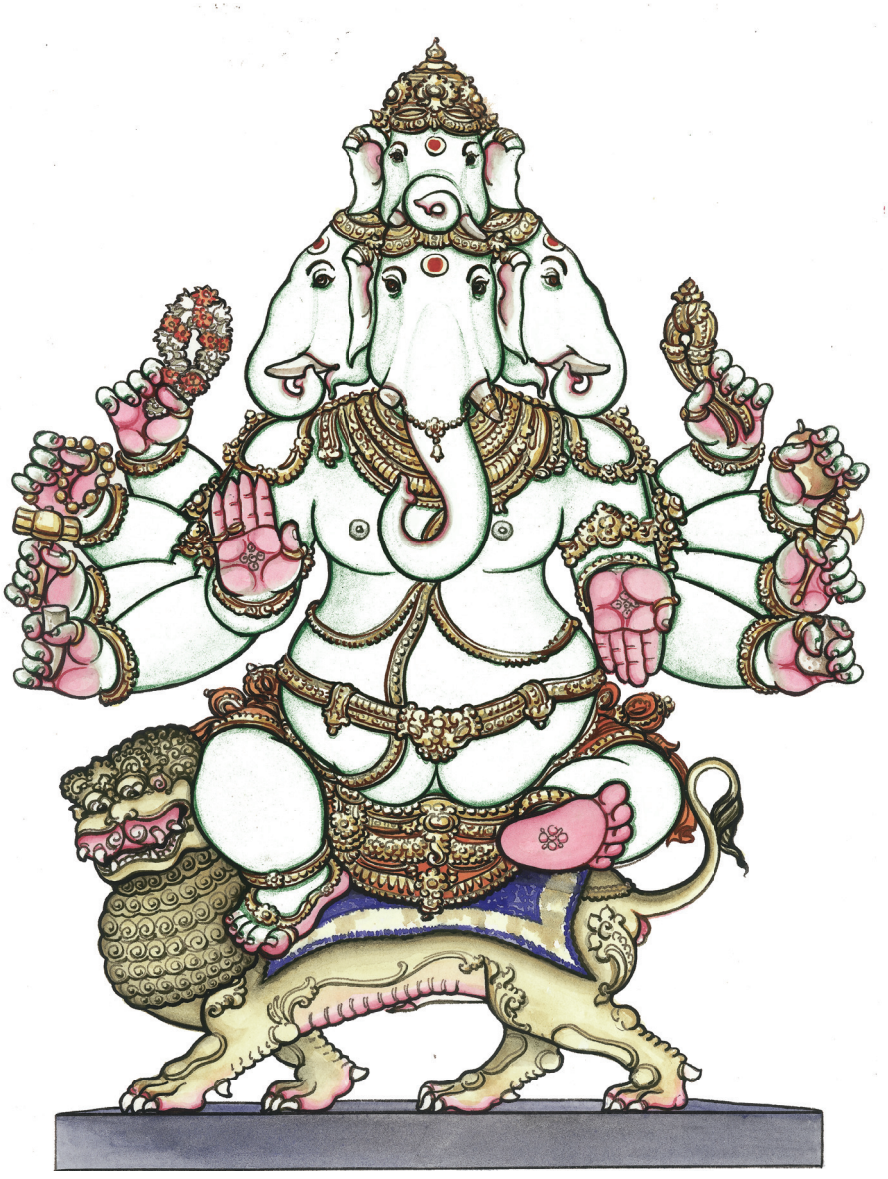


Handsome, red-hued Kshipra Gaṇapati, "Quick-acting" giver of boons, displays His broken tusk, a noose, goad and a sprig of the *kalpavṛiksha* (wish-fulfilling) tree. In His uplifted trunk He holds a tiny pot of precious jewels.

11

Heramba Gaṇapati

हेरम्बगणपति

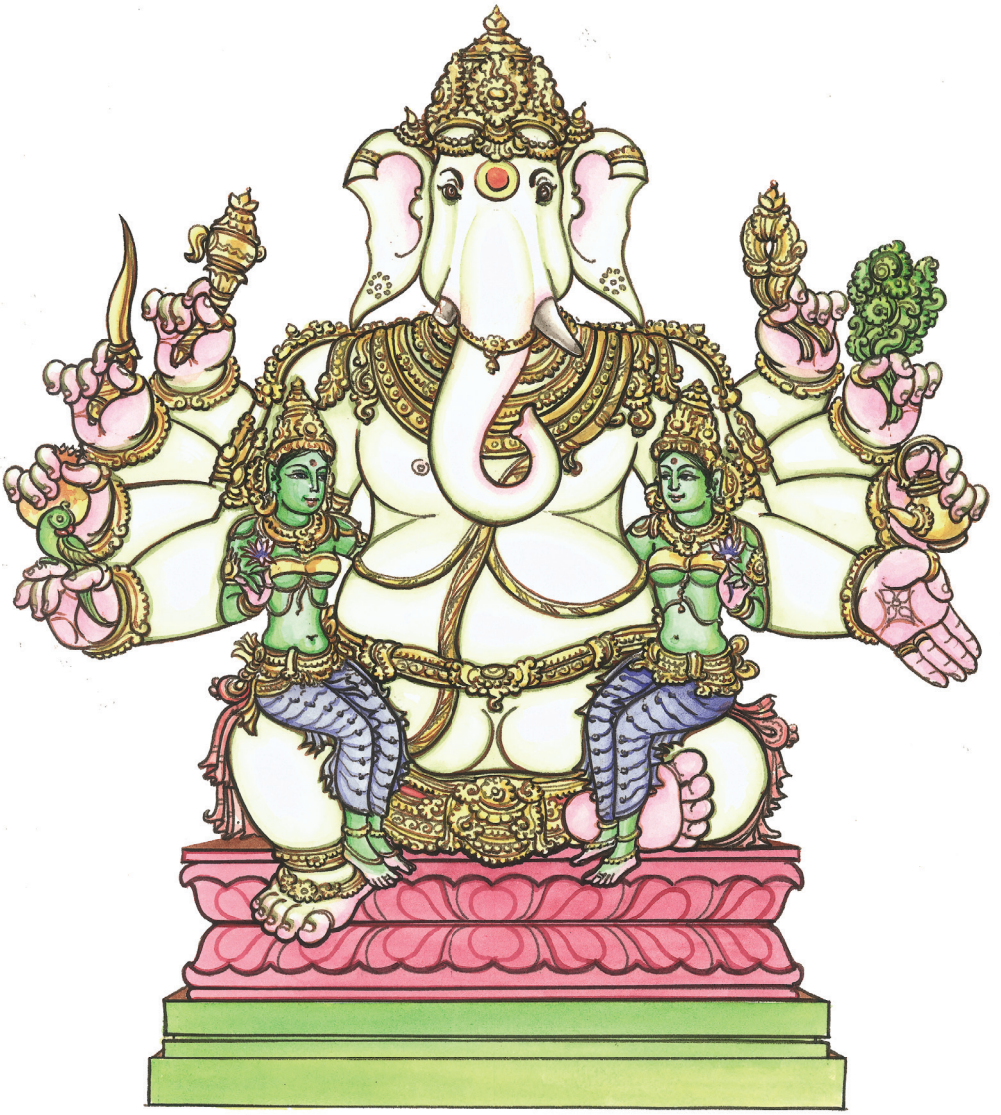


Five-faced, white in color, Heramba Gaṇapati, "Protector of the Weak," rides a fearsome lion. He extends the gestures of protection and blessing while holding a noose, japa beads, axe, hammer, tusk, garland, fruit and *modaka*.

12

Lakshmī Gaṇapati

लक्ष्मीगणपति

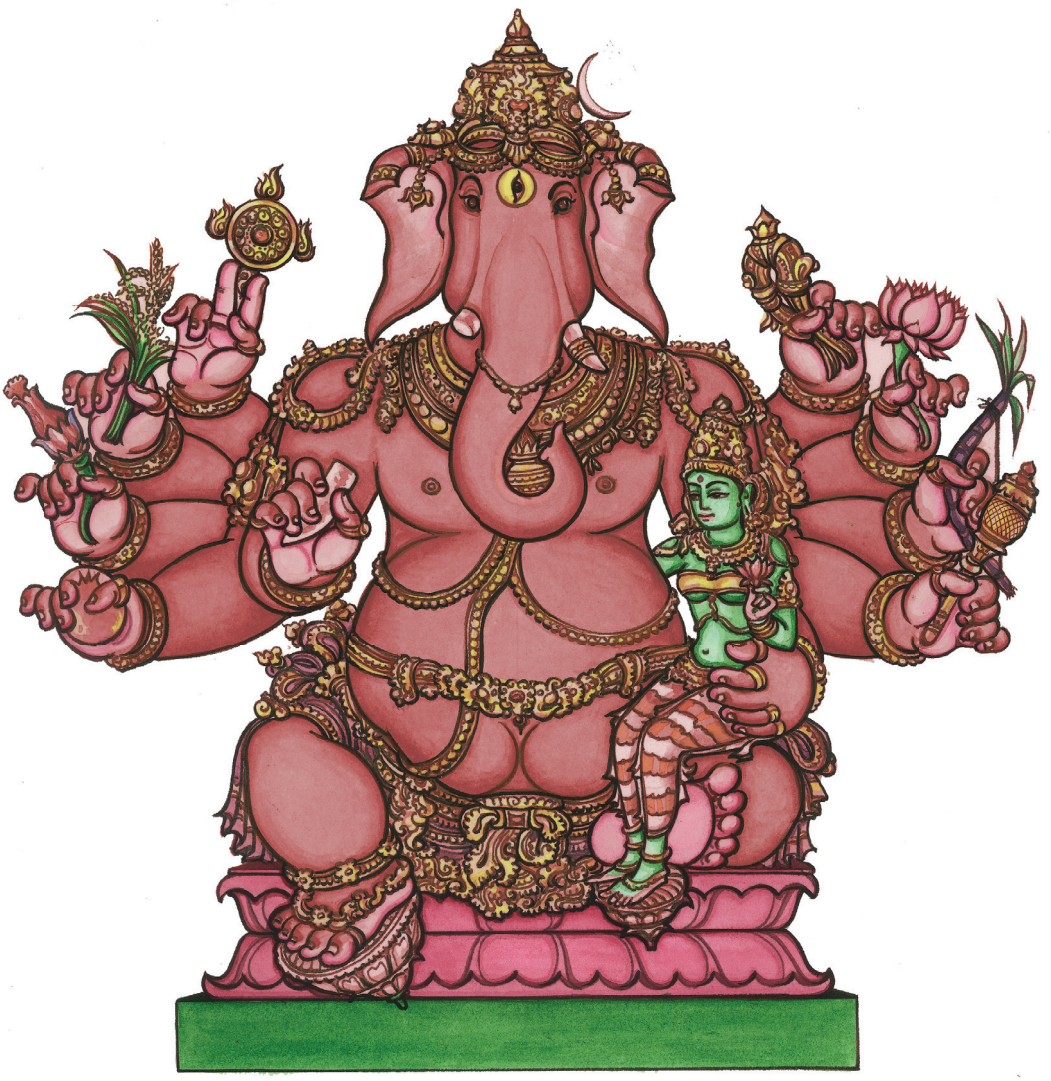


Lakshmī Gaṇapati, pure white giver of success, sits flanked by Wisdom and Achievement. Gesturing *varada mudrā*, He holds a green parrot, a pomegranate, sword, goad, noose, sprig of *kalpavṛiksha* and a water vessel.

13

Mahā Gaṇapati

महागणपति

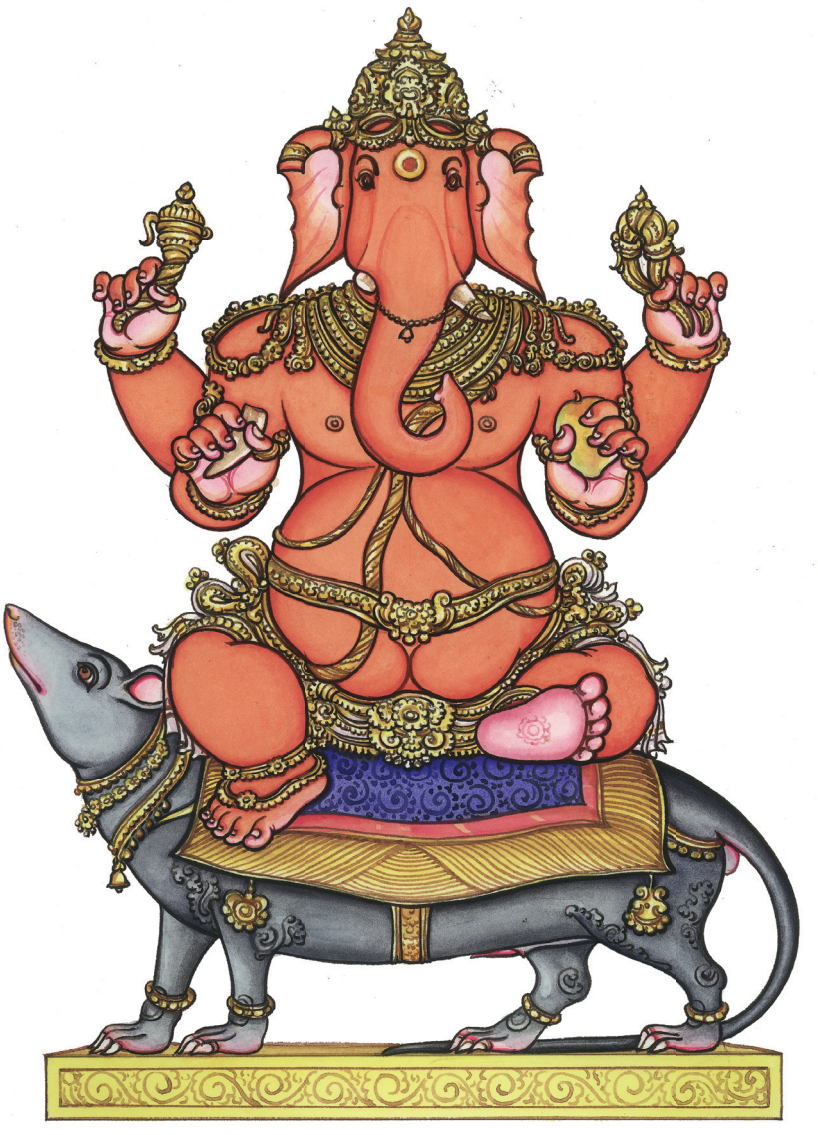


Accompanied by one of His śaktis, "the Great," Mahā Gaṇapati, is red-complexioned and three-eyed. He holds His tusk, a pomegranate, blue lily, sugar-cane bow, discus, noose, lotus, paddy sprig, mace and a pot of gems.

14

Vijaya Gaṇapati

विजयगणपति

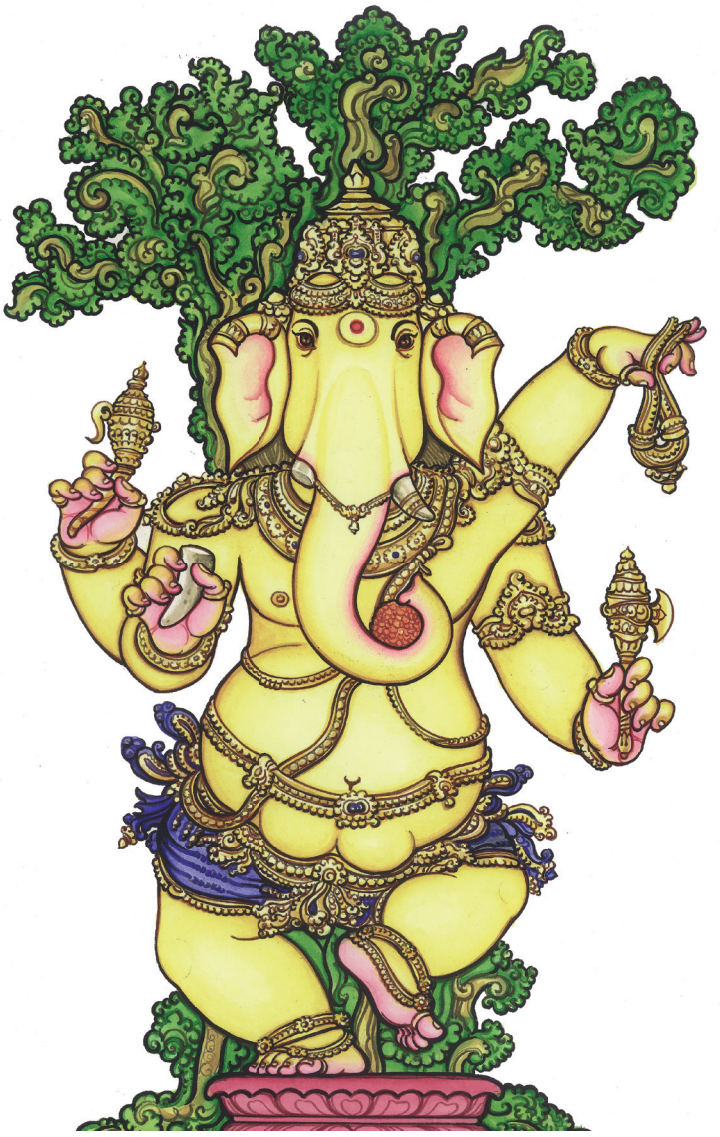


Four-armed, of red hue and riding His resourceful *mūshika*, Vijaya Gaṇapati is "the Victorious" bestower of success. His insignia are the broken tusk, elephant goad, a noose and a lucious golden mango, His favorite fruit.

15

Nṛitya Gaṇapati

नृत्यगणपति

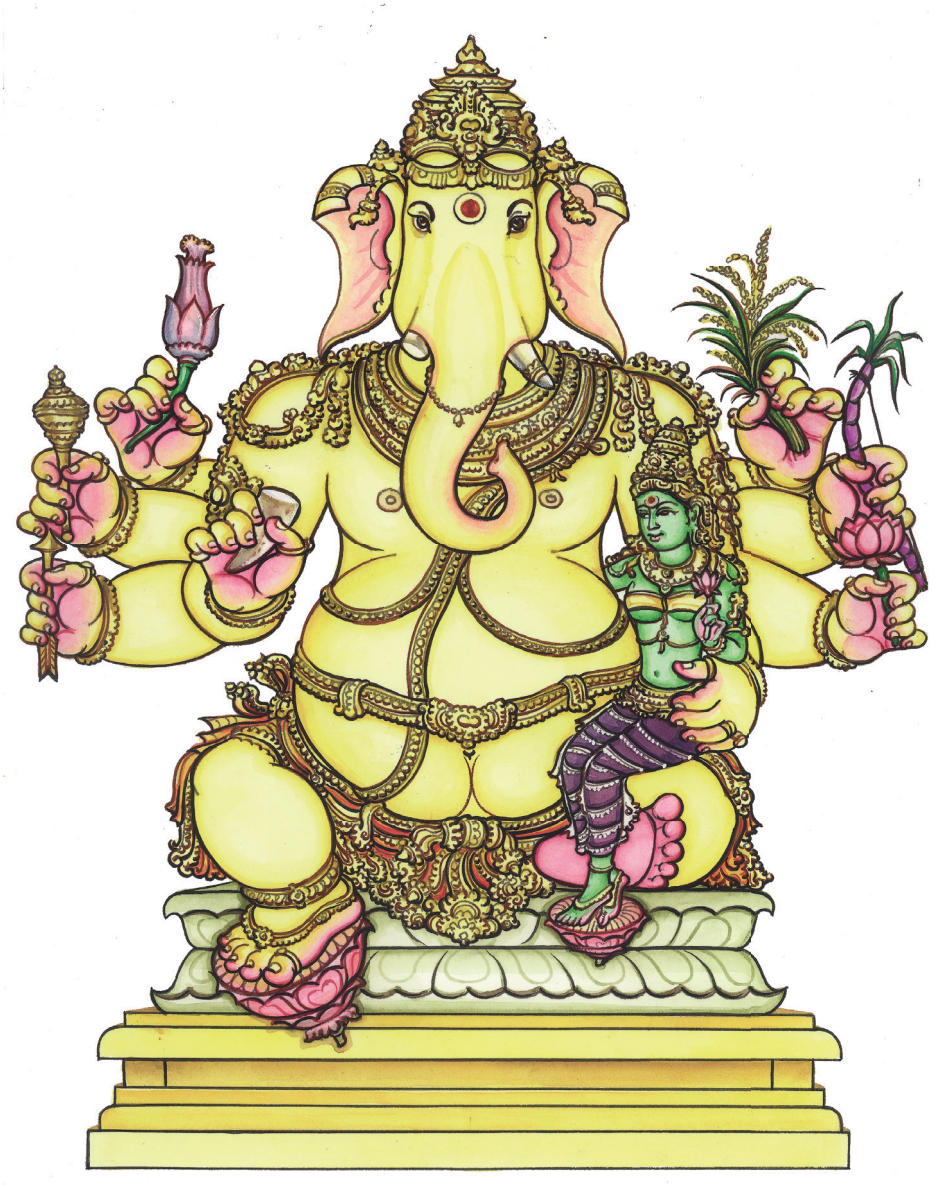


The happy "Dancer," Nṛitya Gaṇapati, is four-armed and golden, with rings on His fingers, holding a tusk, goad, noose, axe and *modaka* sweet. He prances under the *kalpavṛiksha* tree, epitomizing exuberant activity and joy.

16

Ūrdhva Gaṇapati

ऊर्ध्वगणपति

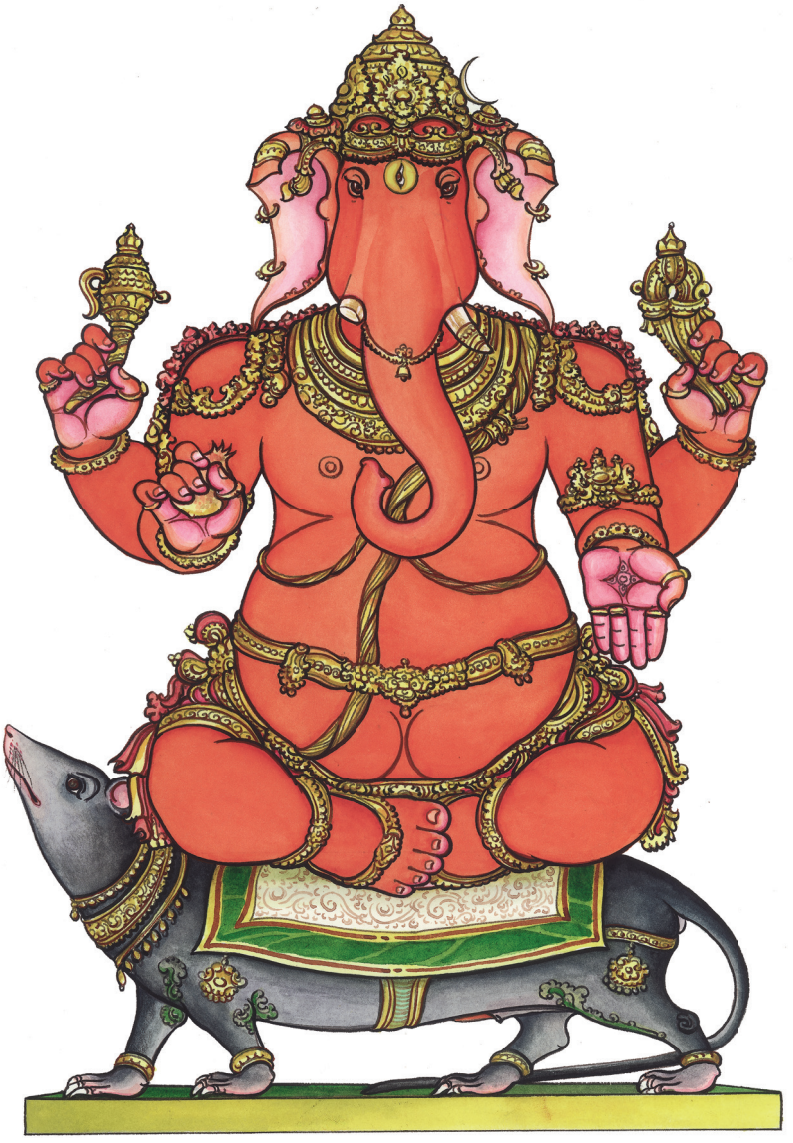


Seated with one of His śaktis on His left knee, Ūrdhva Gaṇapati is "the Elevated" Lord of golden hue. In His six hands He holds a sprig of paddy, a lotus, the sugarcane bow, an arrow, His ivory tusk and a blue water lily.

17

Ekākshara Gaṇapati

एकाक्षरगणपति

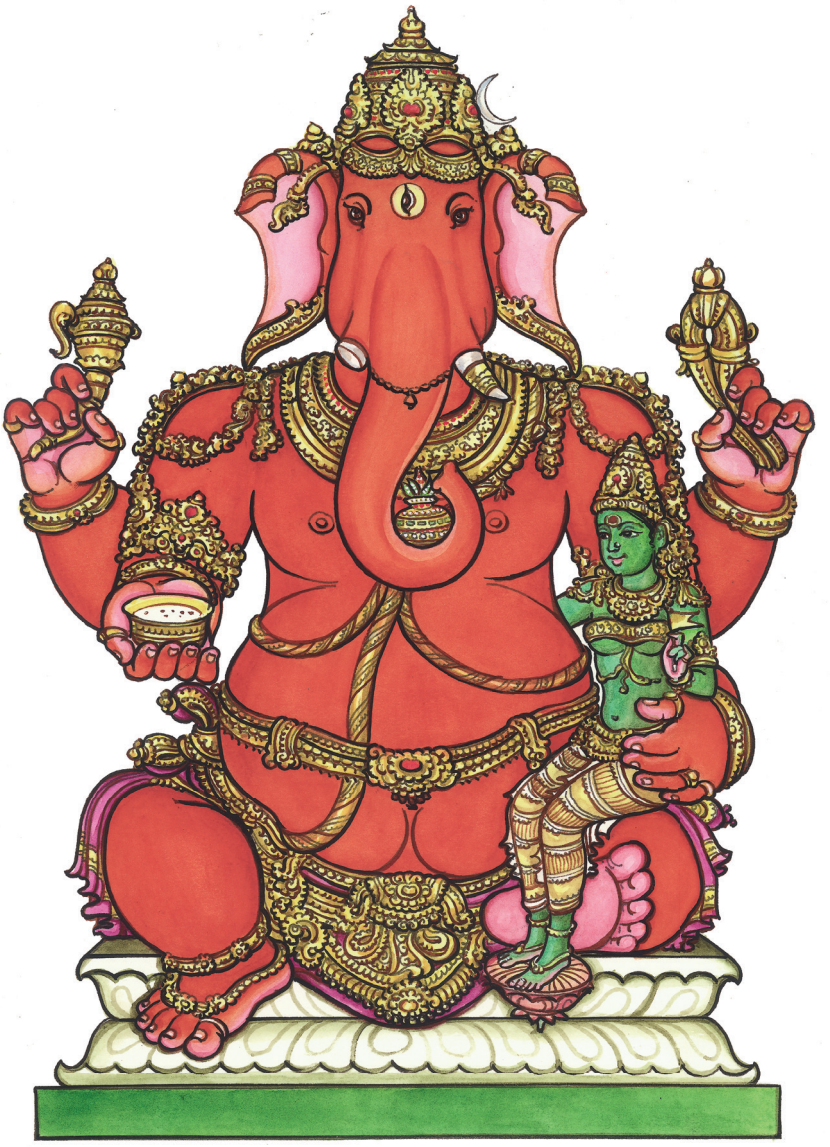


Ekākshara, of "Single-Syllable" *(gaṁ)*, is three-eyed, of red complexion and attire. Crescent moon on His crown, He sits in lotus pose upon Mūshika, offers the boon-giving gesture and holds a pomegranate, noose and goad.

18

Varada Gaṇapati

वरदगणपति

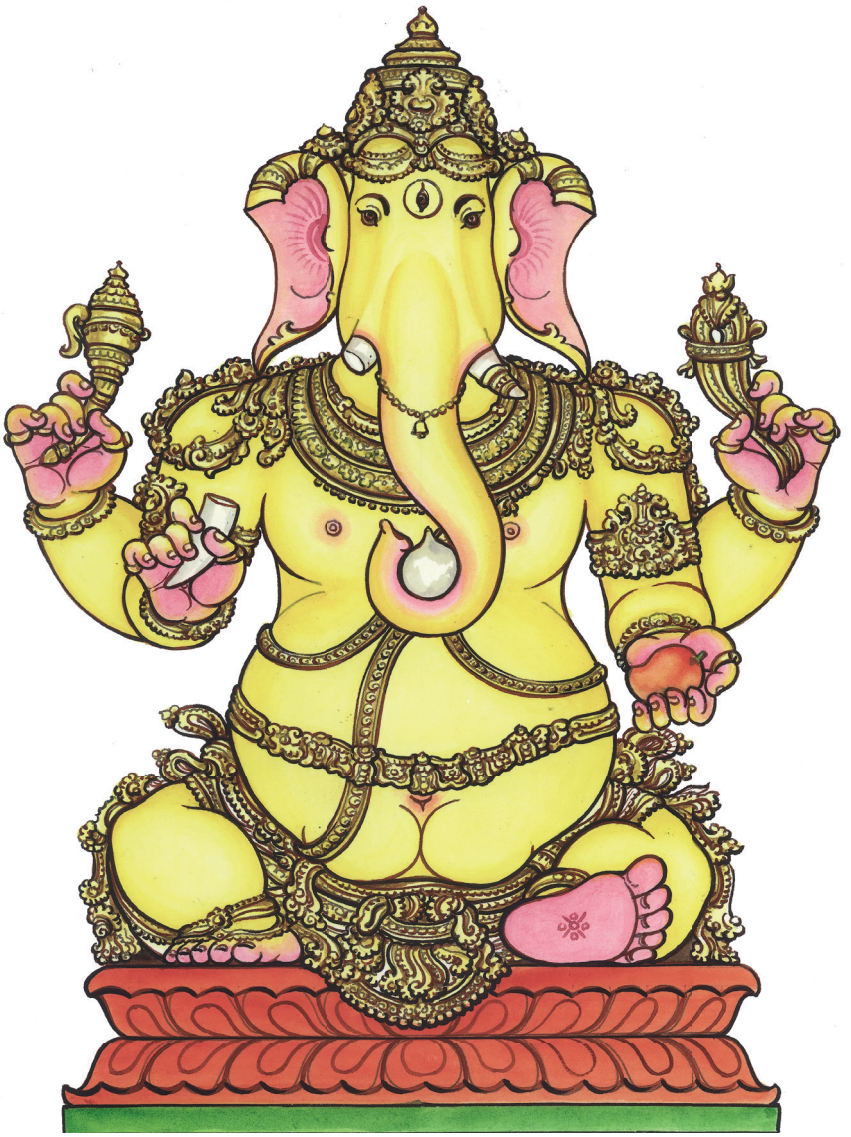


Varada Gaṇapati, "the Boon-Giver" with prominent third eye of wisdom, holds a dish of honey, the noose and goad and encloses a pot of jewels in His trunk. His śakti is at His side, and the crescent moon adorns His crown.

19

Tryakshara Gaṇapati

त्र्यक्षरगणपति

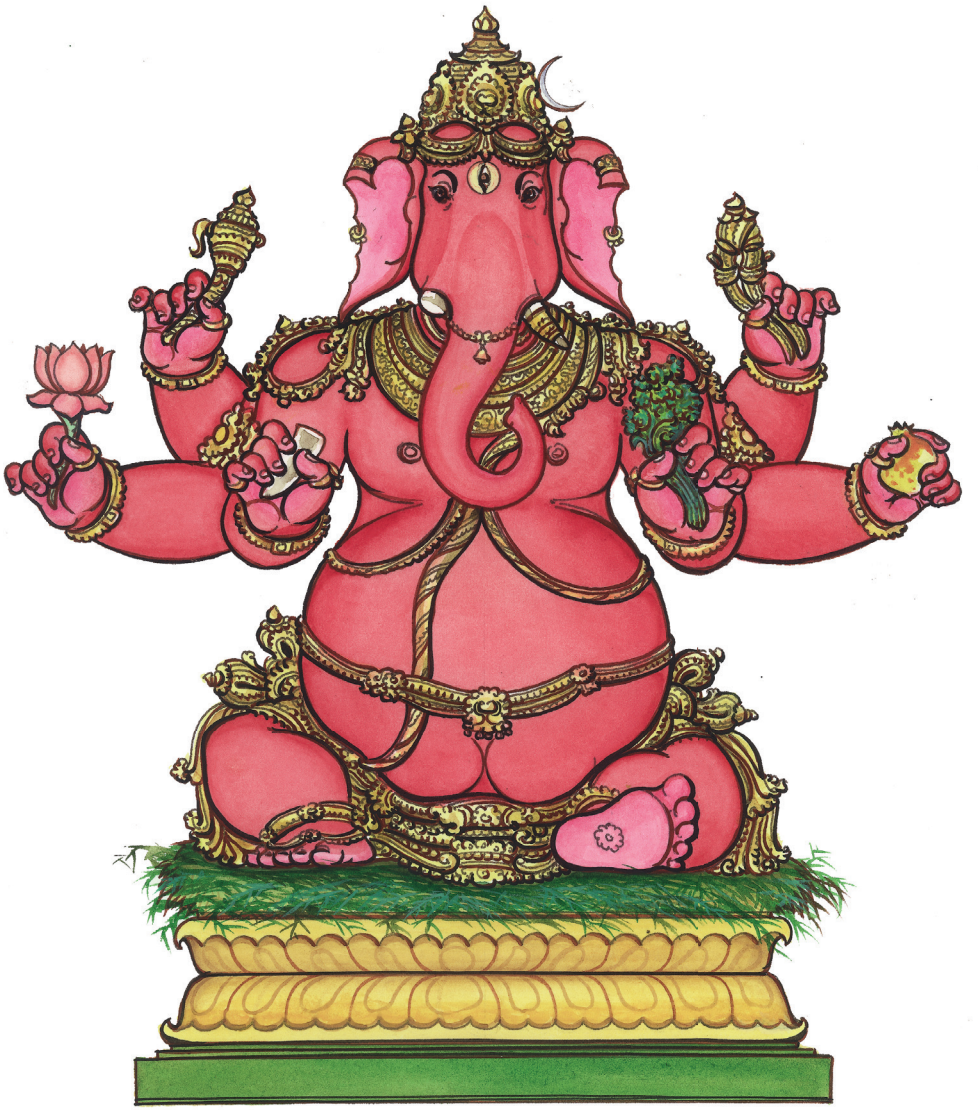


Tryakshara Gaṇapati, "the Lord of Three Letters" (A-U-M), is gold in color and has fly whisks in His big floppy ears. He carries the broken tusk, goad, noose and mango and is often seen grasping a sweet *modaka* in His trunk.

20

Kshipra-Prasāda Gaṇapati

क्षिप्र-प्रसादगणपति

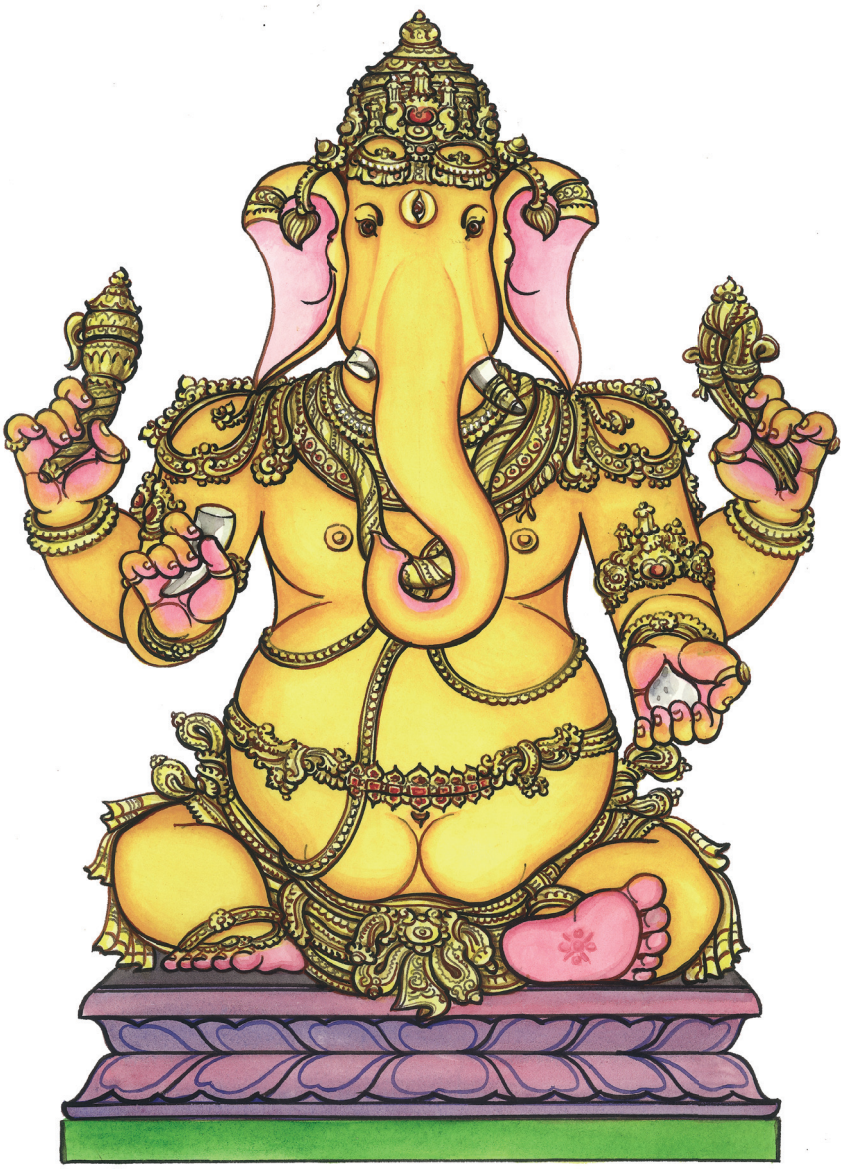


Kshipra Prasāda Gaṇapati, "the Quick Rewarder," presides from a *kusha*-grass throne. His big belly symbolizes the manifest universe. He holds a noose, goad, tusk, lotus, pomegranate and a twig of the wish-fulfilling tree.

21

Haridrā Gaṇapati

हरिद्रागणपति

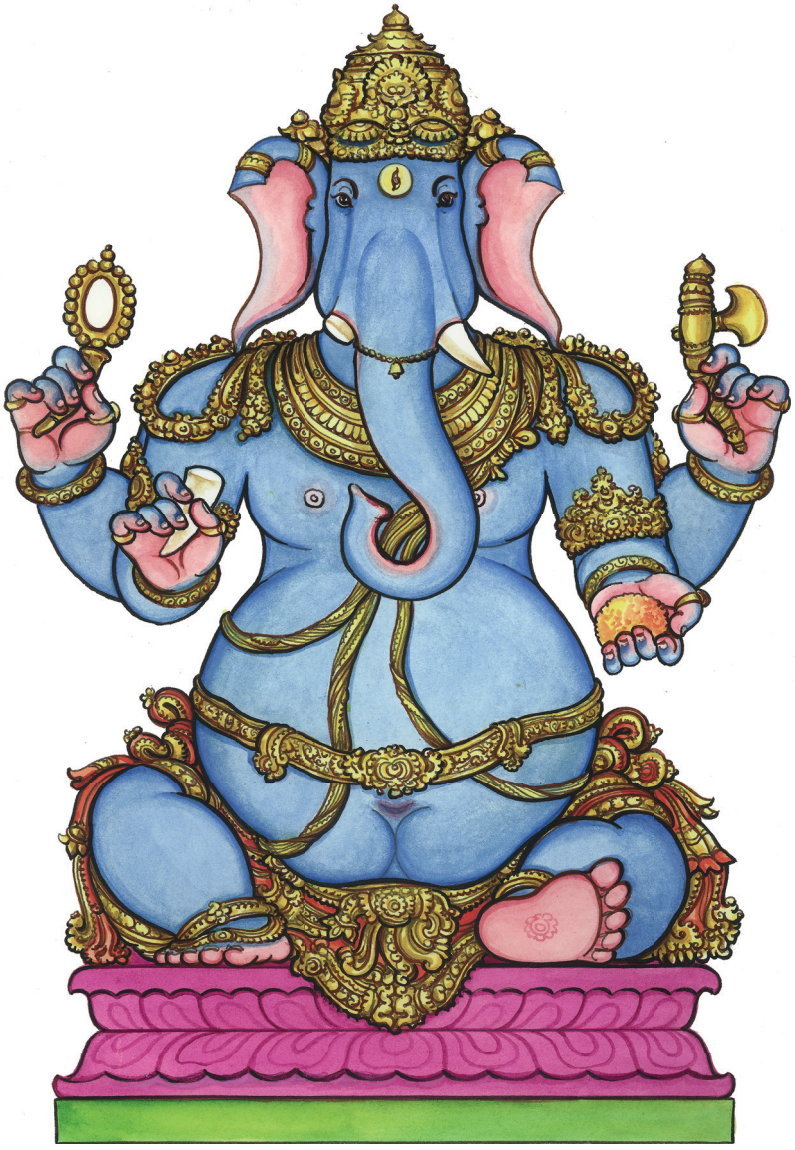


Haridrā Gaṇapati, "Turmeric Colored," dressed in bright yellow vestments, sits calmly on a posh, regal throne. Along with His tusk and a *modaka*, He wields a noose to hold devotees close and a sharp goad to spur them onward.

22

Ekadanta Gaṇapati

एकदन्तगणपति

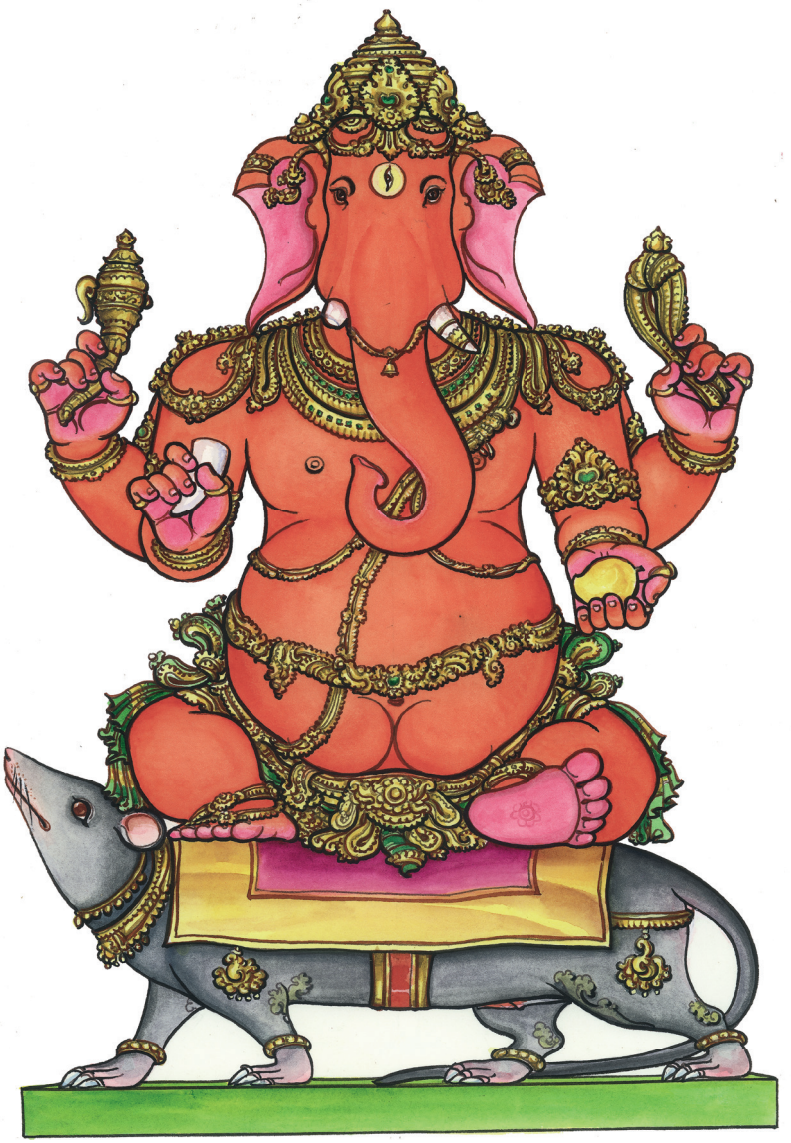


Ekadanta, of "Single Tusk," is distinguished by His blue color and sizeable belly. The attributes of this *mūrti* are an axe for cutting the bonds of ignorance, prayer beads for japa, a *laḍḍu* sweet and the broken right tusk.

23

Sṛishṭi Gaṇapati

सृष्टिगणपति

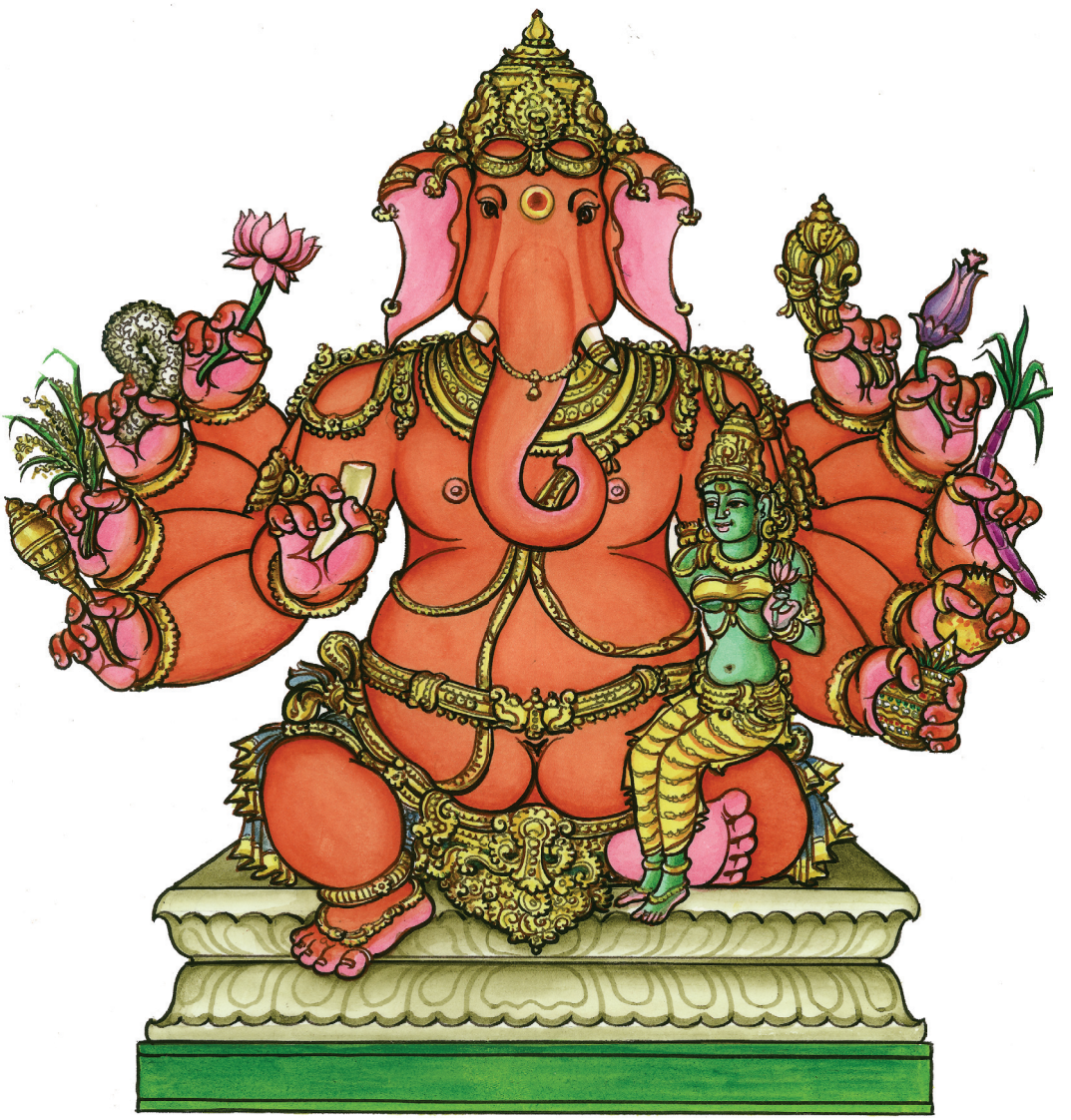


Riding on His docile and friendly mouse, Sṛishṭi Gaṇapati is the lord of happy "Manifestation." This active God, of red complexion, holds His noose a goad, a perfect mango and His tusk, representing selfless sacrifice.

24

Uddaṇḍa Gaṇapati

उद्दण्डगणपति

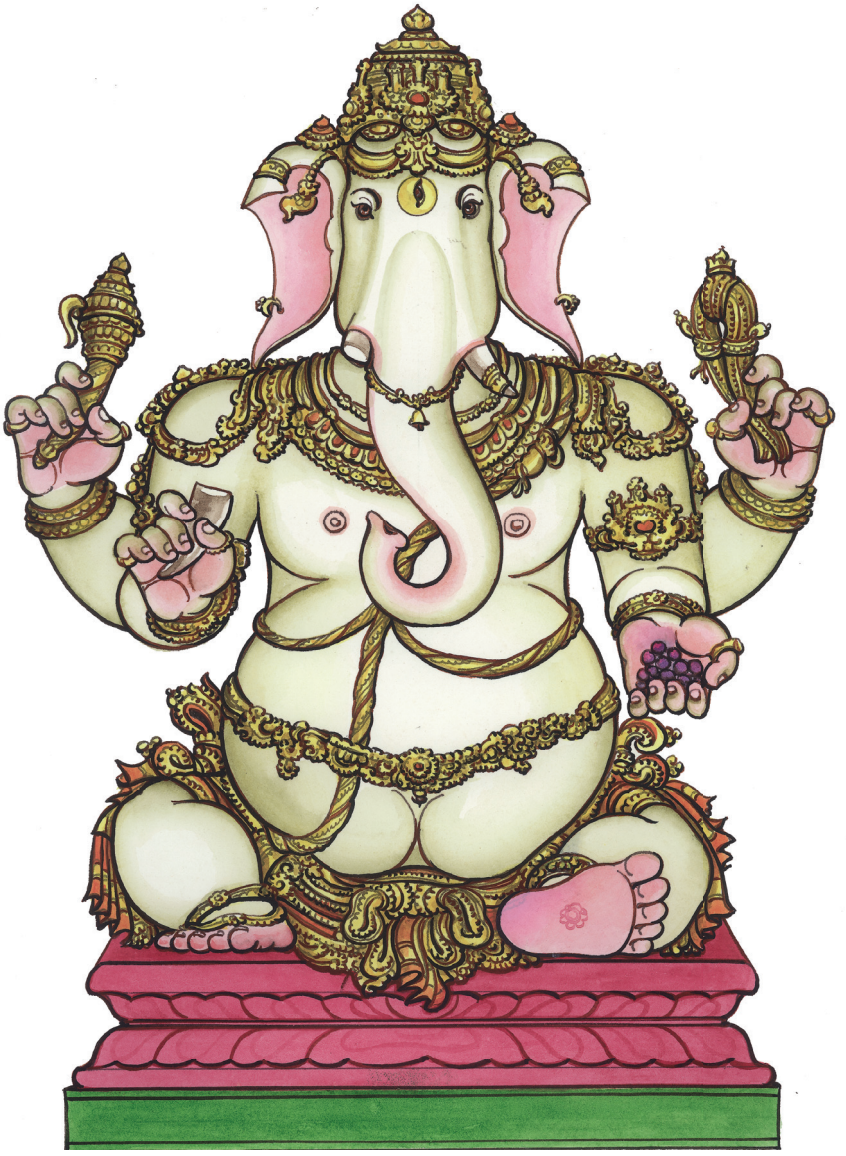


Uddaṇḍa Ganapati is the bold "Enforcer" of Dharma, the laws of being. His ten hands hold a pot of gems, a blue lily, sugarcane, a mace, lotus flower, sprig of paddy, a pomegranate, noose, garland and His broken tusk.

25

Ṛiṇamochana Gaṇapati

ऋणमोचनगणपति

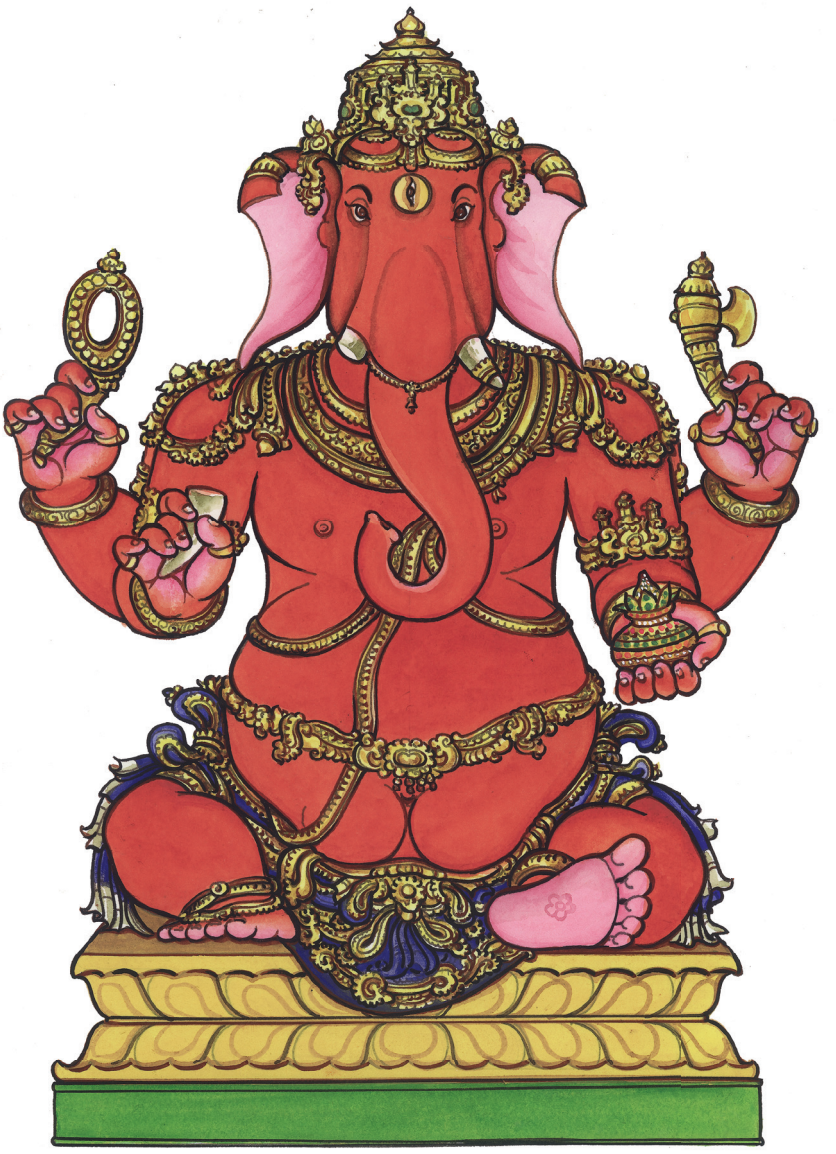


Ṛiṇamochana Gaṇapati is humanity's liberator from guilt and bondage. His figure of alabaster skin is apparelled in red silks. He bears a noose and a goad, His milk-white tusk and a favorite fruit, the rose apple.

26

Ḍhuṇḍhi Gaṇapati

ढुण्ढिगणपति

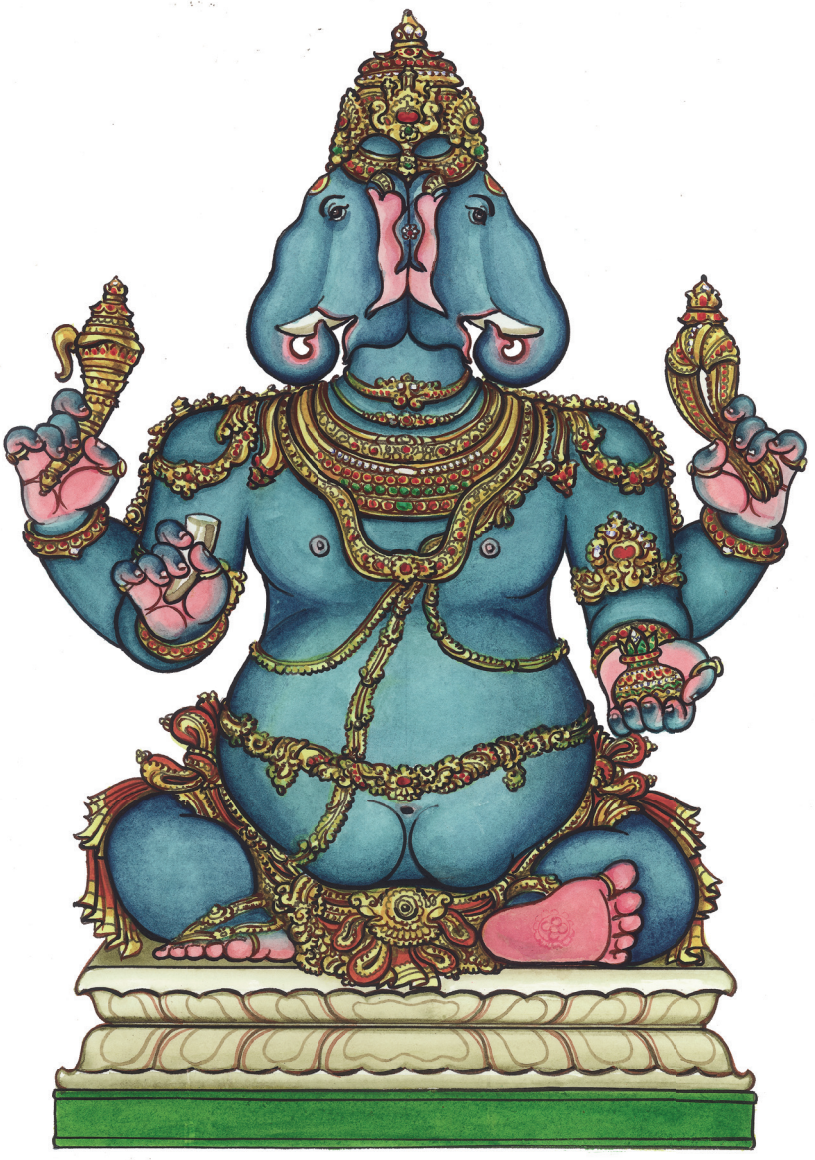


Red-hued Ḍhuṇḍhi Gaṇapati, "the Sought After," holds a strand of *rudrāksha* beads, His broken tusk, an axe and a small pot of precious gems thought to represent the treasury of awakenings He saves for all ardent devotees.

27

Dvimukha Gaṇapati

द्विमुखगणपति

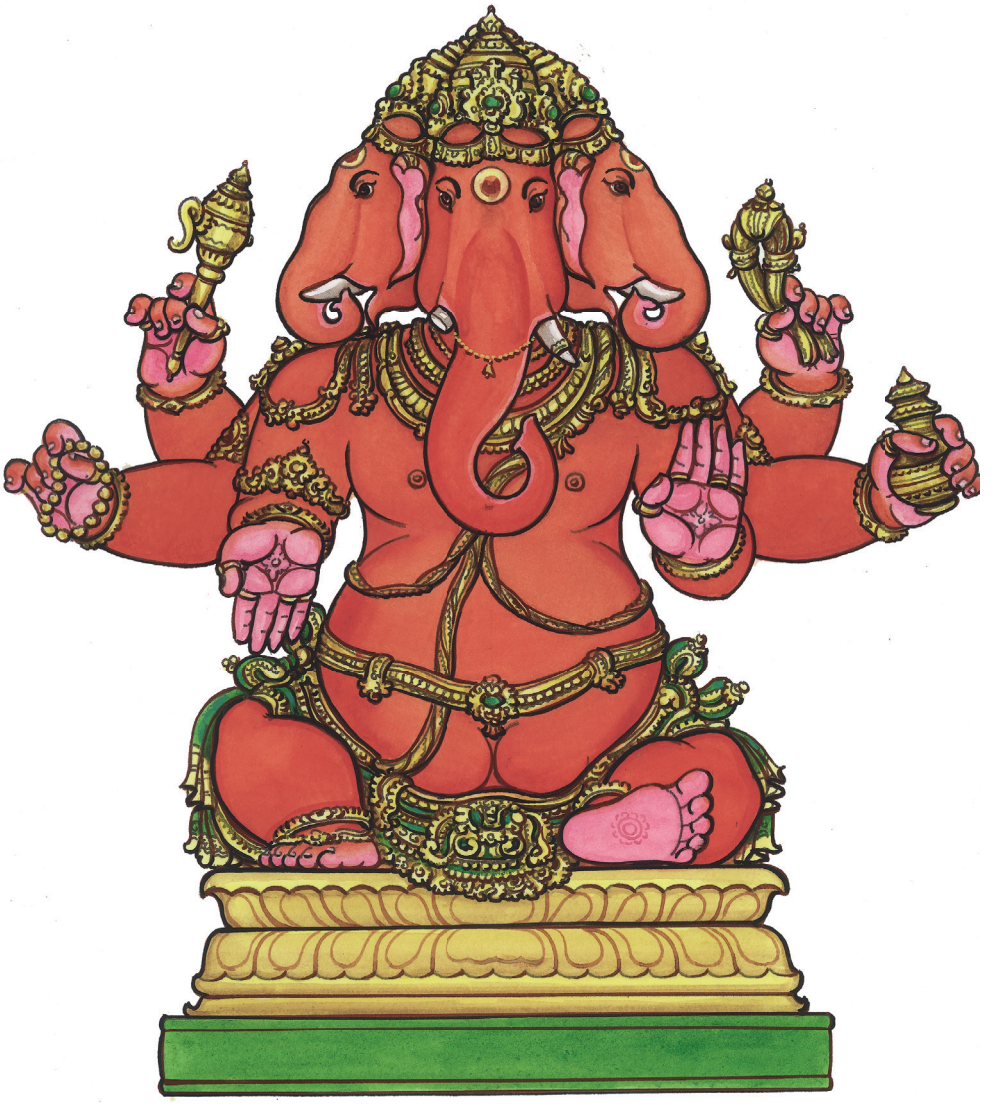


Dvimukha Gaṇapati, called Janus by the Romans, with two divergent faces, sees in all directions. His blue-green form is dressed in red silk. He wears a bejeweled crown and holds a noose, goad, His tusk and a pot of gems.

28

Trimukha Gaṇapati

त्रिमुखगणपति

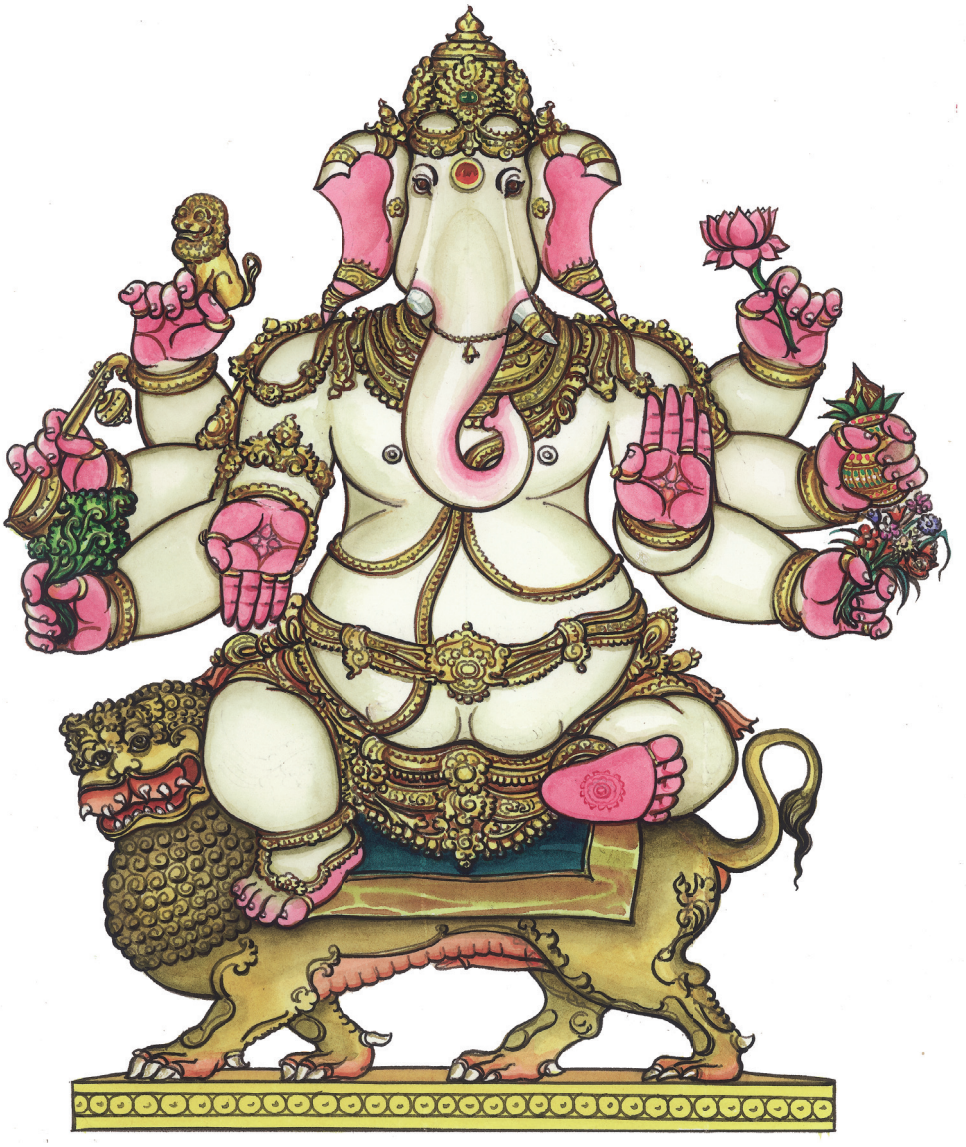


Trimukha Gaṇapati, the contemplative "three-faced" Lord of red hue, sits on a golden lotus, telling His beads, holding a noose, goad and vessel of nectar. He gestures protection with a right hand and blessings with a left.

29

Siṅha Gaṇapati

सिन्हंगणपति

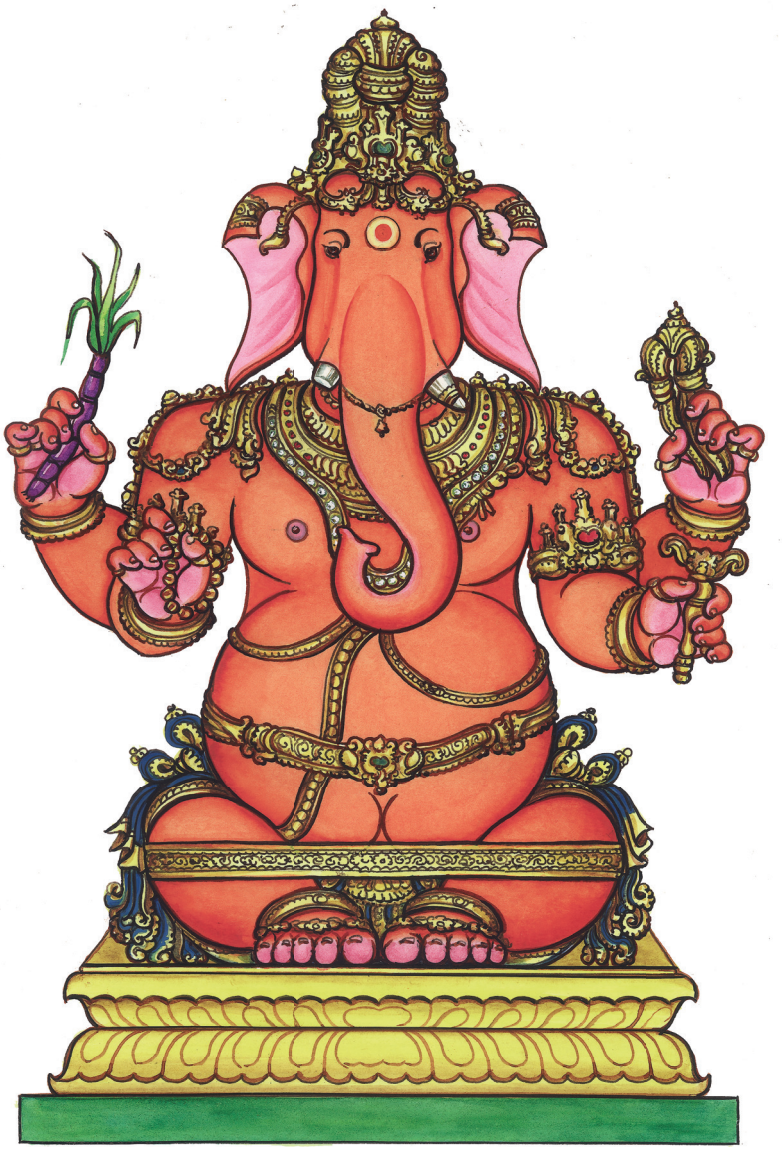


Siṅha Gaṇapati, white in color, rides a lion and displays another lion in one hand, symbolizing strength and fearlessness. He also holds a *kalpavṛiksha* sprig, the vīṇā, a lotus blossom, flower bouquet and a pot of jewels.

30

Yoga Gaṇapati

योगगणपति

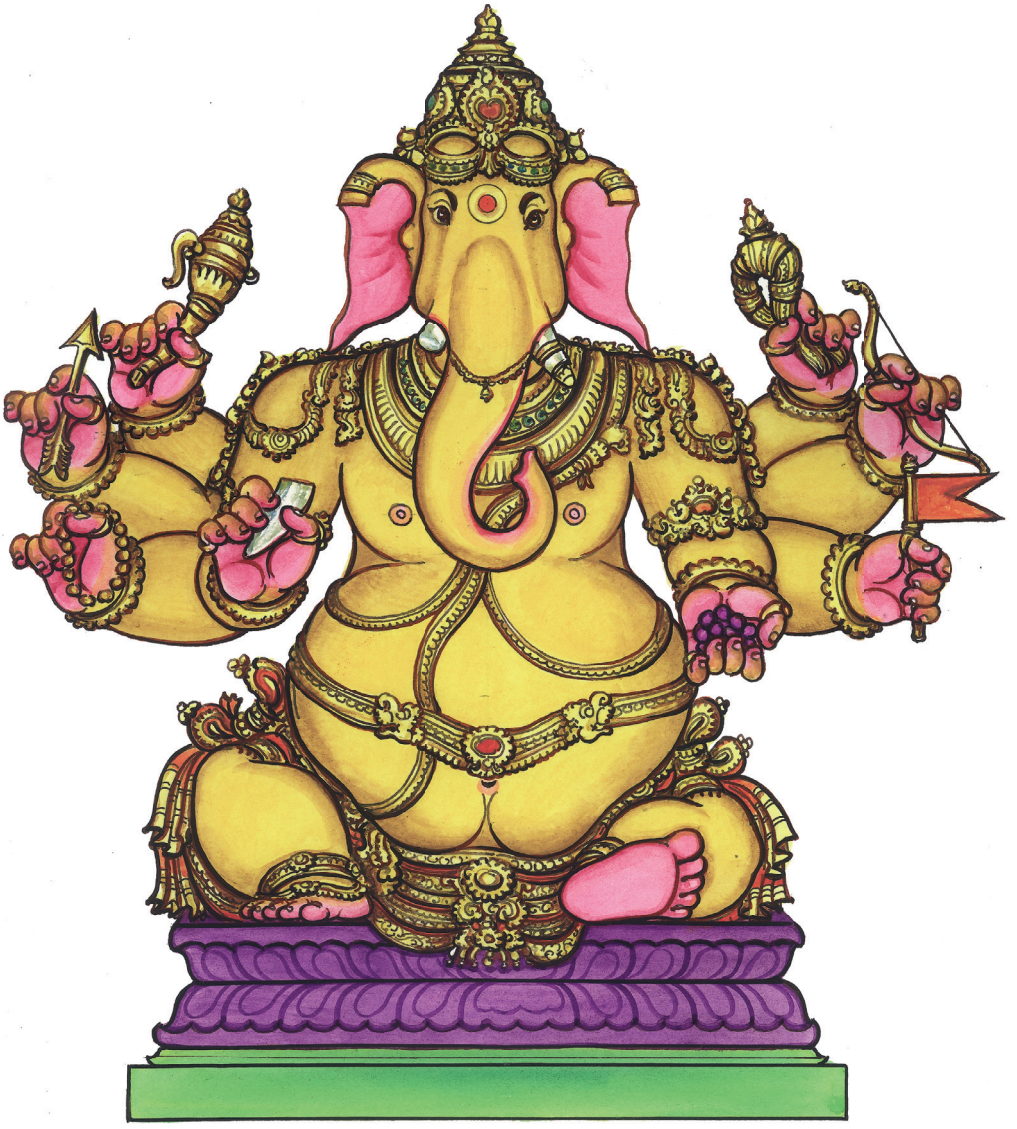


Yoga Gaṇapati is absorbed in mantra japa, His knees strapped in meditative pose, hands holding a yoga staff, sugarcane stalk, a noose and prayer beads. His color is like the morning sun. Blue garments adorn His form.

31

Durga Gaṇapati

दुर्गगणपति

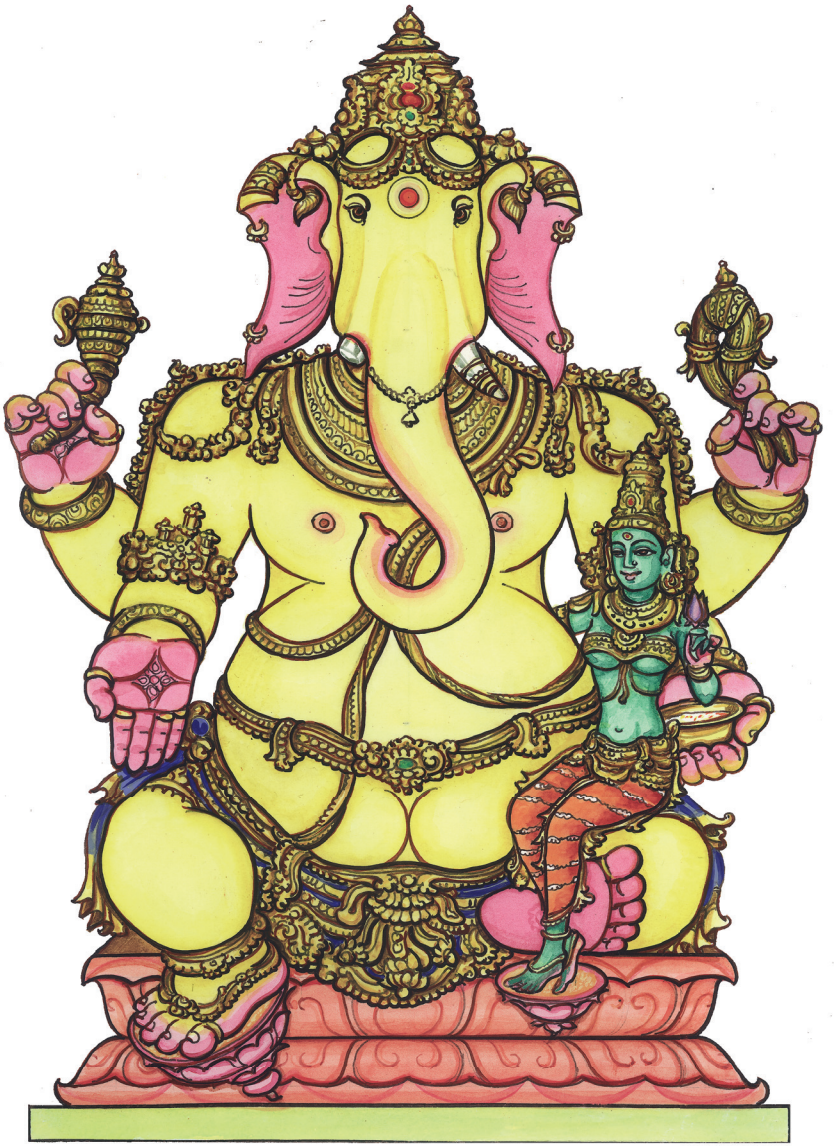


Durga Gaṇapati, the "Invincible," waves the flag of victory over darkness. This splendid *mūrti* is of deep gold hue, dressed in red, holding a bow and arrow, noose and goad, prayer beads, broken tusk and a rose apple.

32

Saṅkaṭahara Gaṇapati

संकटहरगणपति



Saṅkaṭahara Gaṇapati, "the Dispeller of Sorrow," is of sunlike hue, dressed in blue, and seated on a red lotus flower. He holds a bowl of pudding, a goad and a noose while gesturing the boon-granting *varada mudrā*.

Gaṇeśa Iconography

By Dr. L.S. Madhava Rao,
From "Gaṇeśa as Primus Inter Pares,"
Published in the *Organiser,* September 18, 1994

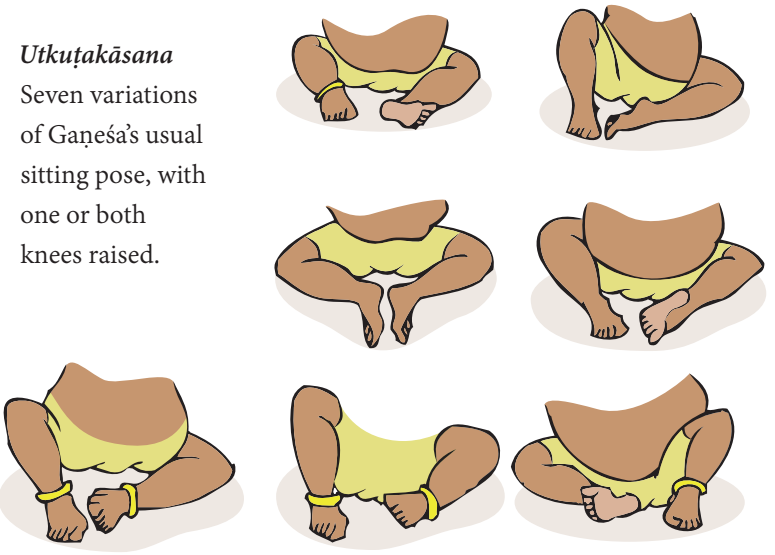
In every Hindu function, invocation to Lord Gaṇeśa for His blessings takes precedence over all other Gods to ward off any mishap. This has been the practice from the Vedic times. Every part of Gaṇeśa's body, such as ear, nose, eyes, trunk, has some significance. One has only to know it, believe in it and follow it. He is intellect par excellence. A critical examination of the various names of the Deities will enable us to know and trace the features of religious development and understand the religious tendencies of the people. Here an attempt is made to highlight how Lord Gaṇeśa in His different *bhaṅgimas* (postures and attitudes) is worshiped in *Āgamic* temples.

1. Icons without headdress in the sitting pose and with two arms: To this class belong two variations. The first is the prevalent *utkuṭakāsana* ["sitting on the hams" with one or both knees raised] see illustration, page 120). Second is Gaṇeśa seated in *padmāsana,* lotus pose, with legs crossed, which is quite rare.
2. Gaṇeśa icons with two arms and headdress: These images are mostly carved out of stone and normally belong to a period between the 9th and 12th centuries. These are represented in the usual *utkuṭaka* pose, and the proboscis is shown taking a left turn and eating from a bowl of pudding held in the left hand.
3. Four-armed figures without *alaṅkāra* [ornamentation] and *prabhāvalī* [encircling arch]: These are discernable specimens of early Gaṇapati sculpture with four arms, devoid of any kind of ornamentation and with little proportion.
4. Gaṇapati icons with four arms, ribbon-like *prabhāvalī, jaṭāmukuṭa* [crown of matted hair] and *udarabandha* [waist band]: These figures are usually ascribed to the period between the 9th and 12th centuries. They are mostly carved out of hard granite, and they present a pleasant and elegant form.
5. Gaṇapati icons with four arms and with bowl-like *kinita* or with conical or *karaṇḍa mukuṭa* [basket-shaped crown]. This type of Gaṇapati image is datable to the 10th, 11th or 12th centuries. They may not have the mount or profusion of *alaṅkara.* The *prabhāvalī* resembles a semicircular tape or is flame-like.

6. Gaṇapati icons representing the Hoysala type: These figures are known for their profusion in ornamentation, delicacy of taste and elegance.
7. Gaṇapati icons with the usual *nāgabandha, vāhana, karaṇḍa mukuṭa* and conventionalized form of details: These figures are assigned to the period between the 14th and 18th centuries. They represent the various forms of Gaṇapati according to the textual prescription.
8. Gaṇapati icons in *tribhaṅga:* Hitherto, four bronzes have been discovered in the *tribhaṅga* pose. Three are ascribed to the 10th century. [Below is an example of *tribhaṅga* in *nṛitya* (dancing) pose, from a *sthapati's* sketch on a workshop wall in Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu.]
9. Nṛitya Gaṇeśa, the dancing form: Only two [ancient] icons of this type have come to light so far. One is a small (20cm high) stone icon at Hariharakshetra, Subrahmanya. The other is a bronze in the Raghavendra Maṭha in Udīpi. This bronze is of considerable iconographic interest. In features, although it presents conventional forms, its theological background is rather unique.

Gaṇeśa's Seating and Standing Poses

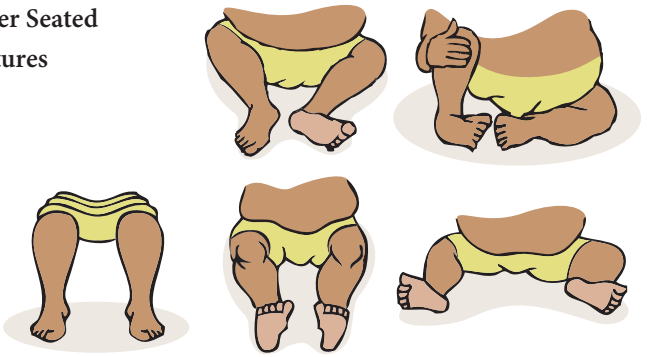
Utkuṭakāsana
Seven variations of Gaṇeśa's usual sitting pose, with one or both knees raised.



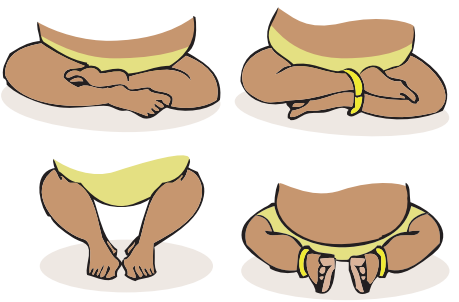
Lalitāsana: Relaxed (playful) poses, at ease.

Nṛitya:
Three dancing poses, the last in *tribhaṅga*.

Other Seated Postures



Six Rare Poses
Four variations of *padmāsana,* the lotus pose.



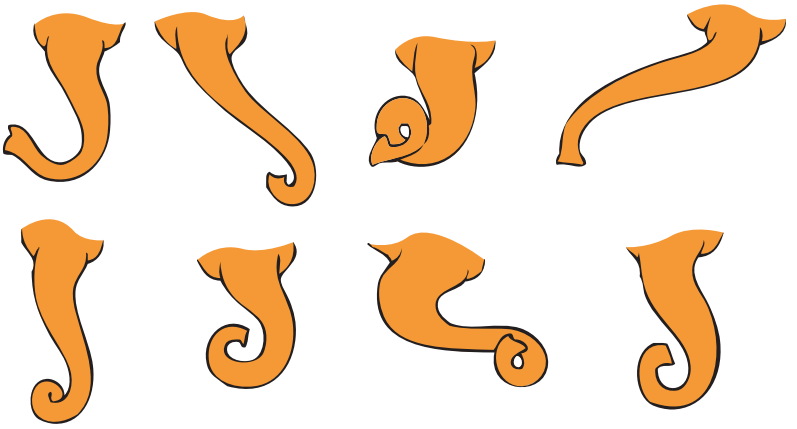
Two other poses, rarely seen in ancient iconography of Gaṇeśa.

Gaṇeśa's Trunk Poses

On the following page are numerous trunk poses. The first group are examples of *valampuri* (turning to the right). Group two are *edampuri* (turning left). In most icons of Loving Ganeśa the trunk is turned toward the left (from the perspective of the Deity). Only in rare cases is it turned to the right.

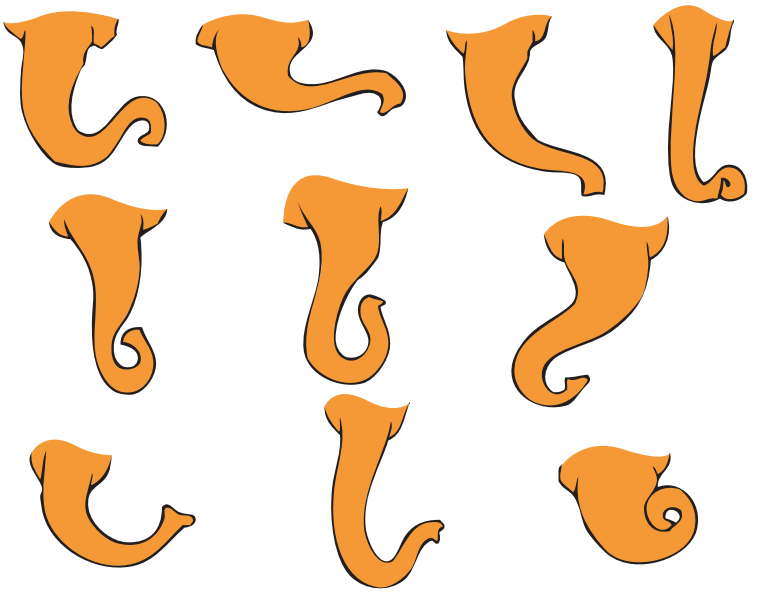
Valampuri Pose

Trunk turning to the Deity's right. This form is very rare.



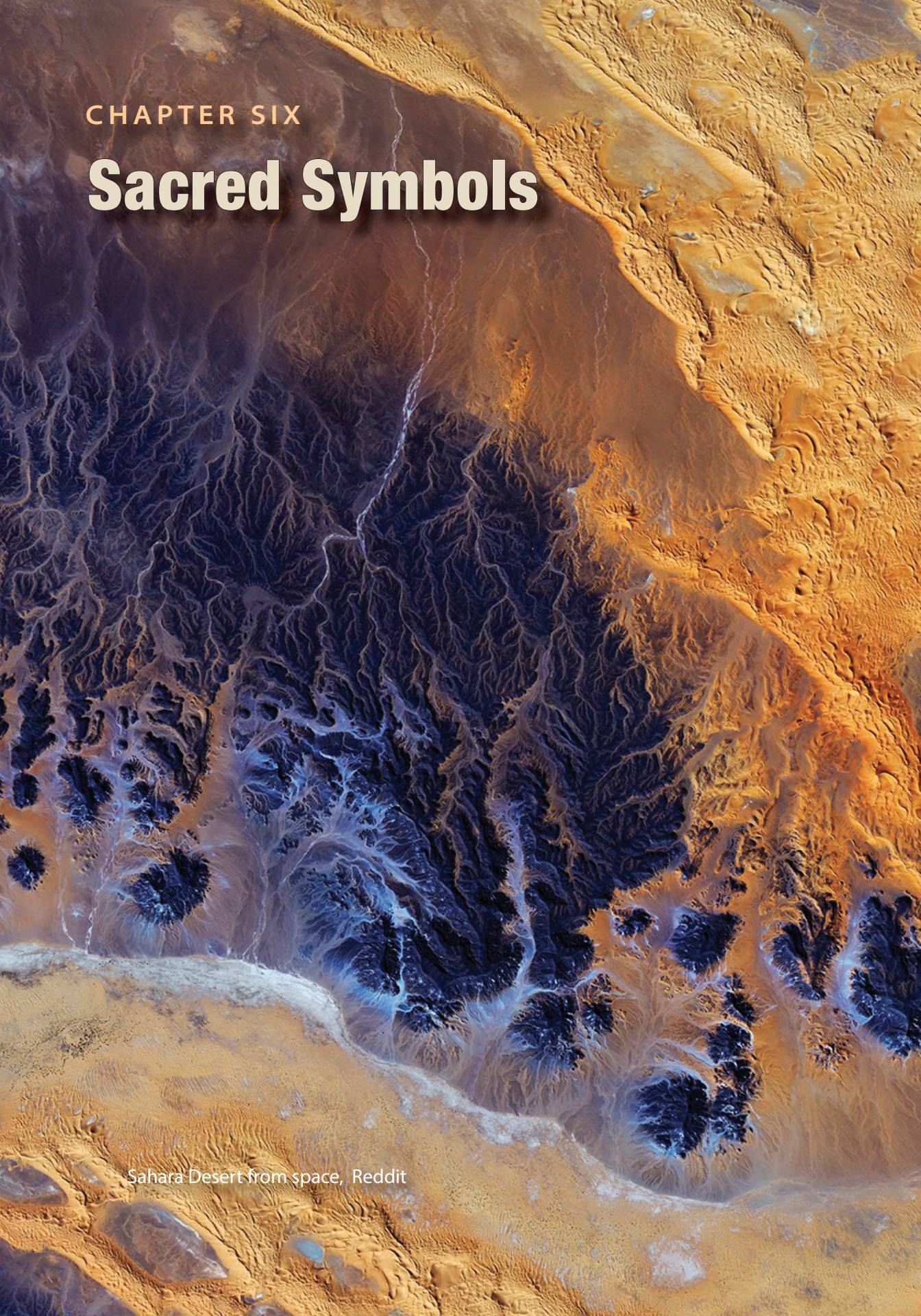
Edampuri Pose

Trunk turning to the Deity's left. This is the common form.

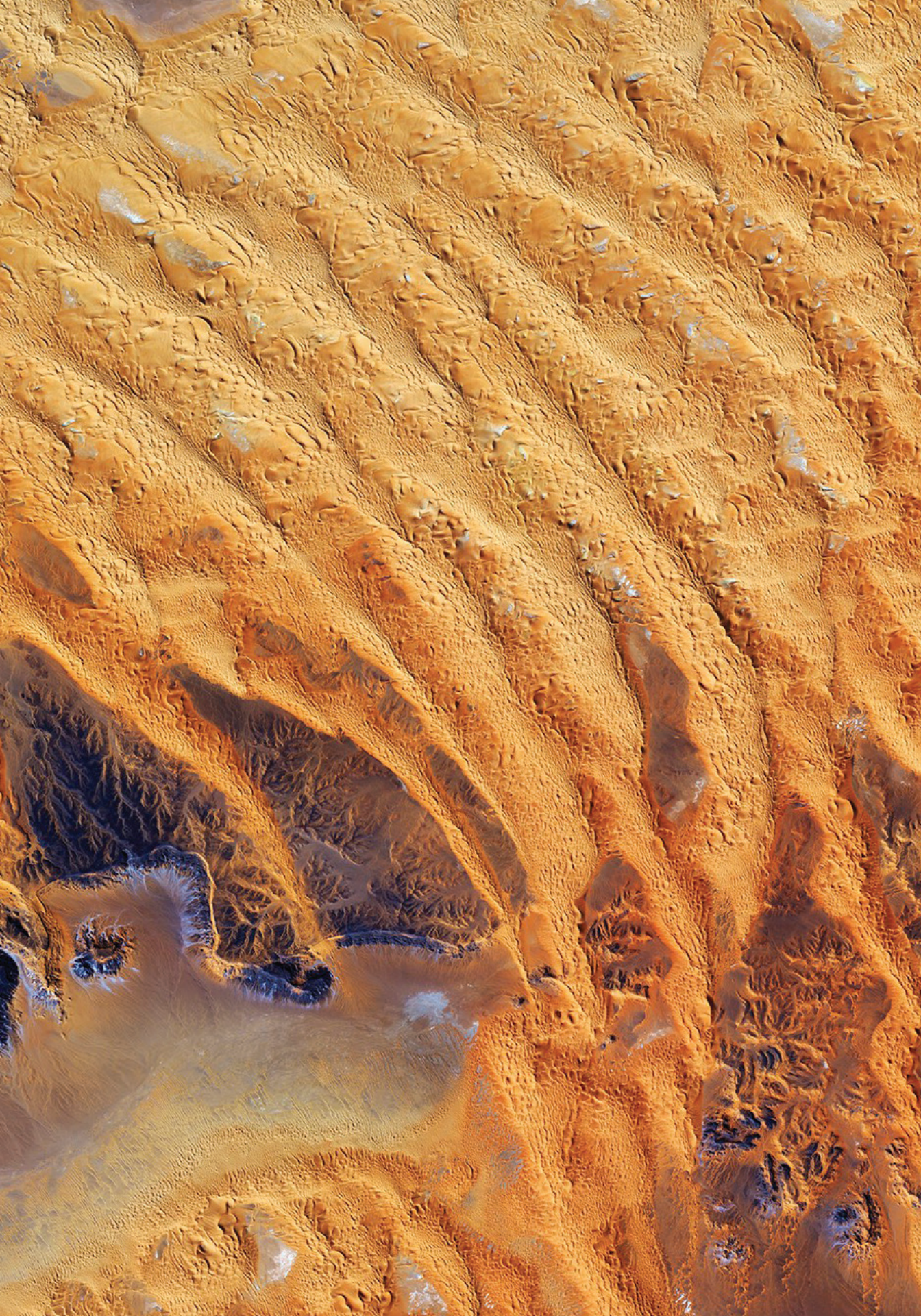


CHAPTER SIX

Sacred Symbols



Sahara Desert from space, Reddit



Sacreð Symbols

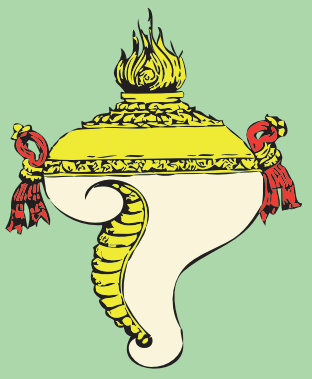
Puṇyalakshaṇāni

पुण्यलक्षणानि

ELICITOUS EMBLEMS, INSIGNIA AND ICONS ARE ATTRIBUTED TO EACH of the Hindu Gods and Goddesses to symbolize the manifest mental powers of that particular Third World Mahādeva. The *vitarka* mudrā, "gesture of debate," is associated with Lord Gaṇeśa, as are red and yellow flowers. Everywhere the elephant symbolizes strength, intelligence and majestic poise. So honored was the elephant among creatures that it was used in regal days to select a successor to the throne. In ancient Bharat the superiority of a mahārāja's army was measured by the strength of his elephant brigade—the largest herd on record being 5,000, owned by Rajaraja Chola. In India, the white elephant is a symbol of purity (elephants, despite their size, are pure vegetarians), and its birth was said to usher in an era of prosperity and plenitude for the entire nation. There are many stories surrounding visions of a white elephant, including that which the mother of Prince Siddhārtha had before his birth. In this chapter of *Loving Gaṇeśa* we describe briefly some of the traditional symbols and their meanings.

"His four arms stand for His immense power in helping humanity. The noose and the goad, borne in two of His hands, stand for His all-pervasiveness and grace. The broken tusk in the right hand shows that He is the refuge for all. His huge belly is indicative of His tolerance and also signifies that all things, the entire Universe, are contained in Him. His feet stand for the bestowal of *siddhi* and *buddhi,* attainment of desires and knowledge. The *modaka* (sweet goody) in His hand is symbolic of jñāna, conferring bliss. His mount, the shrew, represents the worldly desires which are to be overcome" (M. Arunachalam, *Festivals of Tamil Nadu,* 1980, p. 112).

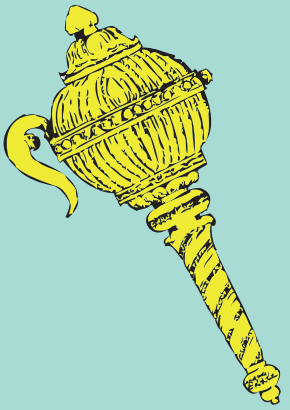
शङ्ख



Śaṅkha, Conch

Gaṇeśa listens to the pūjā conch's loud sound, reminding Him of elephants' trumpeting happily in the jungle. He summons, "Come one and all to Me and pray."

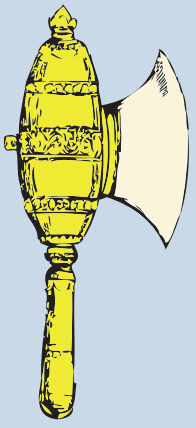
अंकुश



Aṅkuśa, Goad

Loving Gaṇeśa's deliberate mind prods dullards on in their birth karmas whenever they tarry. With His aṅkuśa, He goads forward all souls that are moving too slowly.

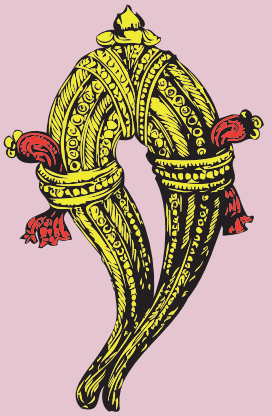
परशु



Paraśu, Axe

Loving Gaṇeśa knows there are difficult times ahead for some of His devotees. He gently protects them with His paraśu from evils they have attracted.

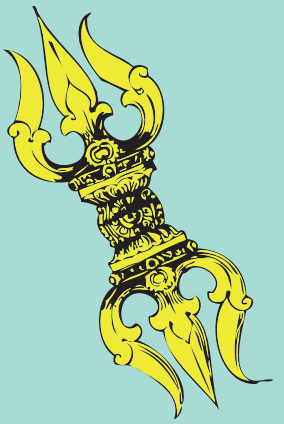
पाश



Pāśa, Noose

Loving Gaṇesa's provident mind, like the noose, draws close those in need and reaches out to encircle and save strayed ones in extraordinary ways.

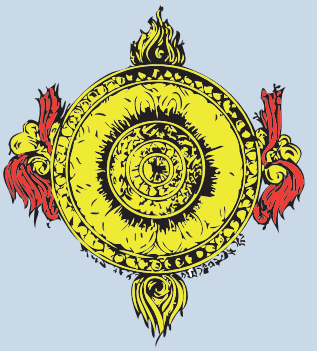
वज्रत्रिशूल



Vajratriśūla, Lightning Bolt

Loving Gaṇeśa, like His brother Murugan, wields a sure weapon, the lightning bolt: spirit over mind, mind over matter, ruling both the higher and lower chakras.

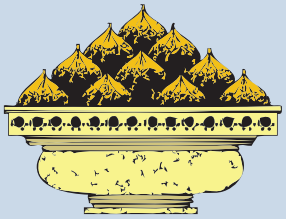
चक्र



Chakra, Discus

Loving Gaṇeśa holds the discus, symbol of the sun and of the mind, as the moon symbolizes the emotions. Employed as a weapon, it is the intellect divinely empowered.

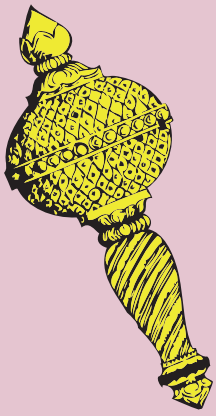
मोदकपात्र



Modakapātra, Bowl of Sweets

Loving Gaṇeśa is said to have a sweet tooth. But the modaka ball is a symbol of what He loves most, moksha, liberation, the sweetest of all things sweet.

गदा



Gadā, Mace

Loving Gaṇeśa is decisive and commanding, as symbolized by the *gadā*, His mace. He casts karmas back on devotees for resolution, never letting up until completion.

छुरि

Çhuri, Dagger

Loving Gaṇeśa sometimes holds the dagger, keenly sharp, likened to the "razor's edge," the narrow and sometimes difficult path the spiritual aspirant must walk.

रुद्राक्ष माला

Rudrāksha Mālā, Prayer Beads

Loving Gaṇeśa sits at Lord Siva's holy feet with japa *mālā,* His prayer beads in hand, waiting for instruction from the Supreme Lord of all the Gods, His father.

पुष्पशर

Pushpaśara, Flower Arrow

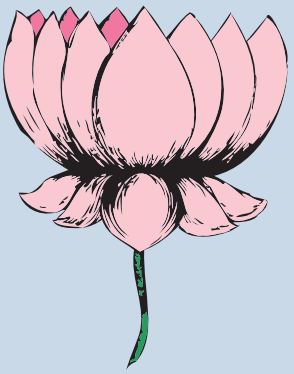
Loving Gaṇeśa shoots flower-covered arrows from His sugarcane bow in guidance to devotees, so they will not wander too far from dharma's path of true fulfillment.

अमृतकुम्भ

Amṛitakumbha, Pot of Nectar

Loving Gaṇeśa receives a bath whenever a worshiper knocks his temples with arms crossed. The *amṛita* flows from the *sahasrāra* down to His seat at the *mūlādhāra's* base.

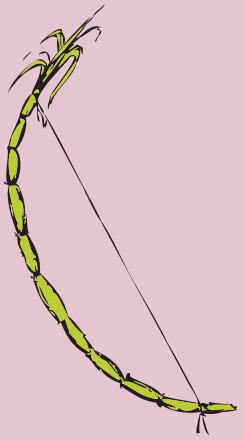
पद्म



Padma, Lotus

Gaṇeśa wants devotees to learn confidence from the potential of the lotus flower: coming from the depths of the mud into the bud's opening high above the water.

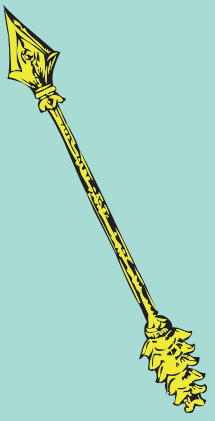
इक्षुकार्मुक



Ikshukārmuka, Sugarcane Bow

Loving Gaṇeśa shows His generous nature of giving all that is good to devotees. His sugarcane bow shoots the kindest arrows, which are projections of His thought.

शर



Śara, Arrow

Loving Gaṇeśa has power over thought, and each one hits its mark. Bow drawn, arrow aimed, He teaches us to precisely begin all undertakings with good intentions.

वीणा

Vīṇā, Indian Lute

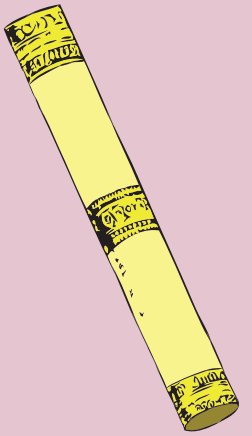
Loving Gaṇeśa is sound in all its beauty and meaning. Śiva is the ocean; Gaṇeśa is its sound. Śiva, the wind God; Gaṇeśa its sound. Listen to the vīṇā within and hear.

असुर

Asura, Goblin

Loving Gaṇeśa is not beyond frightening those who live in the chakra of fear by sending His *gaṇas* to lift them into a better life. Sometimes in need fear is a helpmate.

दण्ड



Daṇḍa, Stick

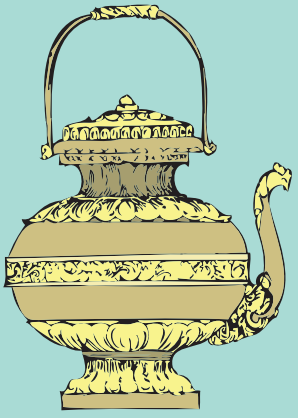
Gaṇeśa carries a short stick, a sign of authority, warning all not to impede the noble ways of dharma and restraining those who have as much as the thought to do so.

चामर

Chāmara, Fly-Whisk Fan

Loving Gaṇeśa sits, as He always does, whisking away the past within the minds of devotees, young and old, rich and poor, educated and earthy—because He is so wise.

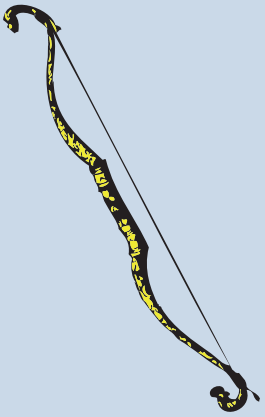
कमण्डलु



Kamaṇḍalu, Water Vessel

Loving Gaṇeśa, dear to sannyāsins, keeps their water vessel full. Symbol of fullness, meeting all needs, kamaṇḍalu eternally pours out, never needing to be filled.

धनु



Dhanu, Bow

Loving Gaṇeśa is discreet as He draws His bow and bends His thoughts into forms most helpful to His dear devotees. They all cherish His attentions with great ecstasy.

नाग

Nāga, Serpent

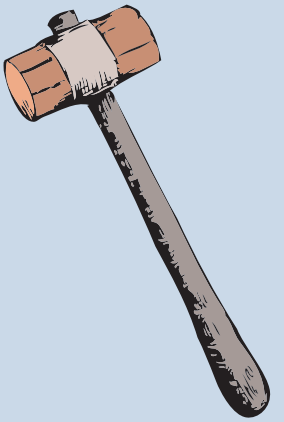
Loving Gaṇeśa has a snake as His pet. Many are afraid of such creatures; but He tells us that it is the kuṇḍalinī within all, and each one can rise above all adversity.

शालिपल्लव

Śālipallava, Rice Sprig

Loving Gaṇeśa knows rice is the life-sustainer of villagers and city folk alike. Holding a sprig of paddy, He assures rains will come and all will be well at harvest time.

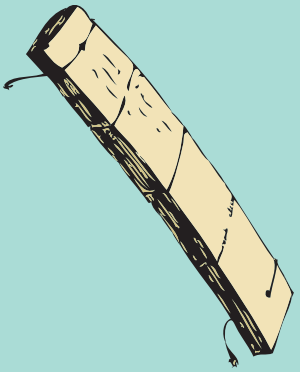
मुद्गर



Mudgara, Hammer

Loving Gaṇeśa wields a mallet, badge of His office as Patron of Arts and Crafts, protector of all who build and shape, chisel and sculpt for the benefit of society.

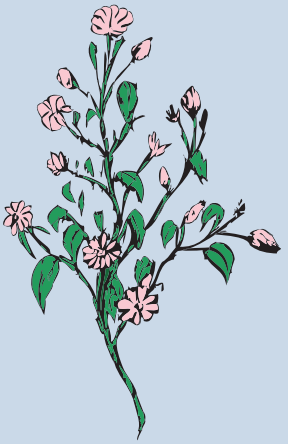
शास्त्र



Śāstra, Scripture

Loving Gaṇeśa studiously edits all the scriptures on this planet and on others, too. His ever-ready, potent pen writes and edits life's ordinances and comments on their meanings.

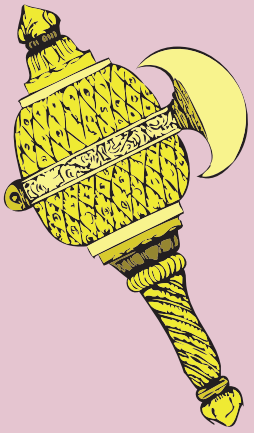
कल्पवृक्ष



Kalpavṛiksha, Wish-Fulfilling Tree

Loving Gaṇeśa holds a sprig of the wish-fulfilling tree to tell us that all our wishes will be gratified. We have but to tell Him our needs, that is all, just tell Him.

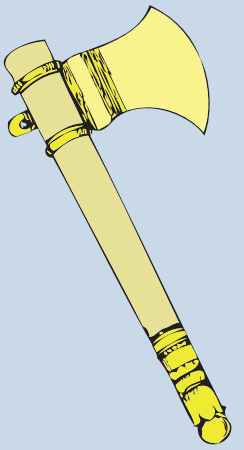
परशु



Paraśvadha, Battleaxe

Loving Gaṇeśa knows sometimes strong measures must be taken to fulfill a righteous goal, like crashing through a jungle. He wields the battleaxe as a mind force.

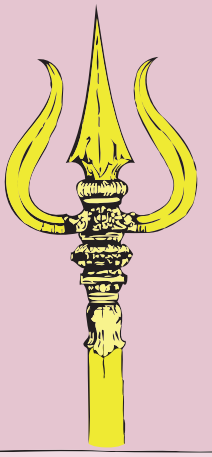
महापरशु



Mahāparaśu, Large Axe

Loving Gaṇeśa often brandishes a big axe. This powerful weapon frightens off *asuras* and banishes malicious thoughts of those who intend harm to His devotees.

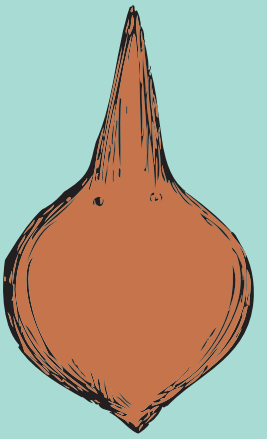
त्रिशूल



Triśūla, Trident

Loving Gaṇeśa makes His way through the mind's vast complexities with His abilities represented by *triśūla,* His three-fold power of Love, Wisdom and Action.

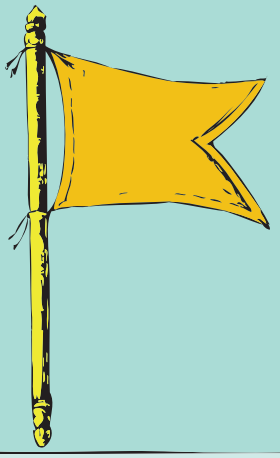
नारिकेल



Nārikela, Coconut

Loving Gaṇeśa holds the coconut, symbol of the ego, soft and sweet inside, hard and rough outside. When we break a coconut to Him, we break the ego's hold on us.

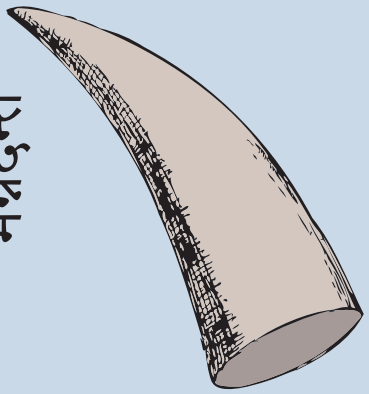
ध्वज



Dhvaja, Flag

Loving Gaṇeśa is the spirit of mirth. On festival days, the saffron-hued Hindutva *dhvaja* flies proudly over His temples, bringing crowds from near and far.

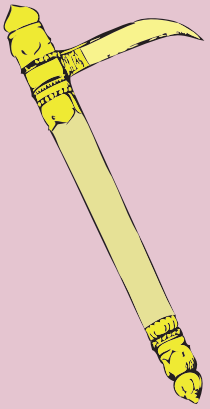
भग्नदन्त



Bhagnadanta, Broken Tusk

As the story goes, Gaṇeśa broke off His right tusk in a sacrificial act to use it as a stylus while taking Vyāsa's dictation. Thus he teaches us that we must finish what we start.

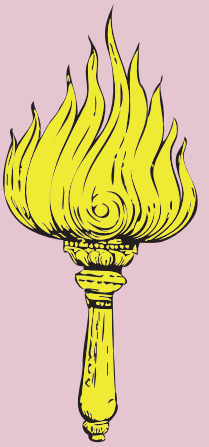
पाषाणदारण



Pāshāṇadāraṇa, Pick Axe

Loving Gaṇeśa is not naive by any means. He knows that trials await devotees, and that He must, in order to respond to prayers, pick, pick, pick away their mental dross.

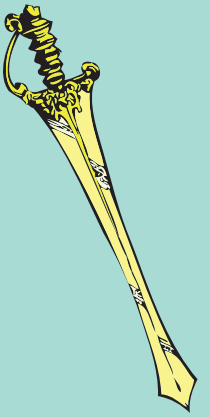
अग्नि



Agni, Fire

Loving Gaṇeśa activates His fiery powers, capable of consuming our dross, of destroying our residual karmas, if we but consign our misdeeds to the purifying flames.

खड्ग



Khaḍga, Sword

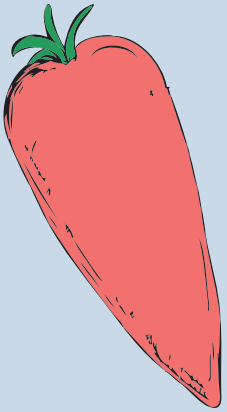
Loving Gaṇeśa has a sword bejeweled with precious gems. It gives notice to those who respond only to fear of His enmity to crime and His abhorrence of hurting.

फल

Phala, Fruits

Loving Gaṇeśa, dweller in the forest, enjoys all of Earth's many life-sustaining fruits. He wants parents and children alike to stay healthy by eating lots of energy-giving fruits.

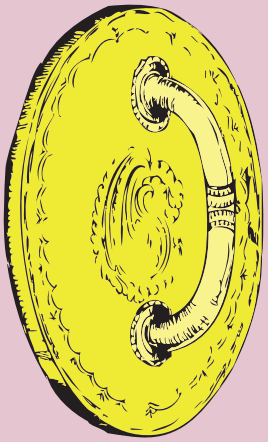
मूलक



Mūlaka, Radish

Loving Gaṇeśa, by His partiality for the simple radish, inspires us to grow food that is good for us. He knows devotees may grow more than they need just to please Him.

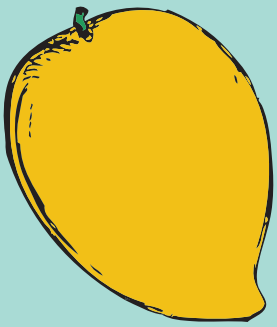
खेटक



Kheṭaka, Shield

Loving Gaṇeśa holds the shield of divine security, symbol of His power to defend lands of the upright, to preserve traditions and to protect all souls on the spiritual path.

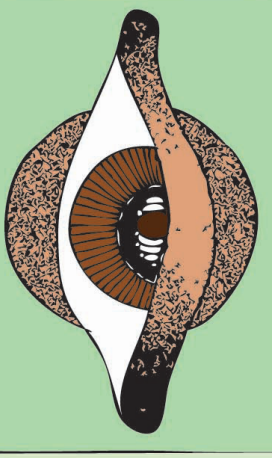
आम्र



Āmra, Mango

Loving Gaṇeśa says of the mango: “It was given to Me from Lord Śiva’s own hand after performing My first wisdom act. It represents the highest spiritual fruition.”

तृतीयाक्षि



Tṛitīyākshi, Third Eye

Loving Gaṇeśa, as do we all, has three eyes, not two, the third being the eye of the mind, of spiritual sight. With this eye He sees the reality behind the world's seeming.

रत्नकुम्भ

Ratnakumbha, Pot of Gems

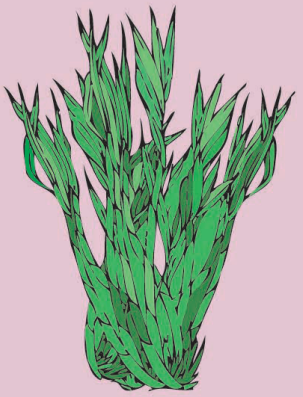
Loving Gaṇeśa knows the magical power resident in gems. Diamonds, rubies and emeralds are like human souls, each with a different color, faceting, loveliness and value.

गारित्र

Gāritra, Grains

Loving Gaṇeśa knows there are many kinds of people and they need variety in diet. He protects the cultivation of all kinds of grains that make their bodies strong.

इक्षुकाण्ड



Ikshukāṇḍa, Sugarcane

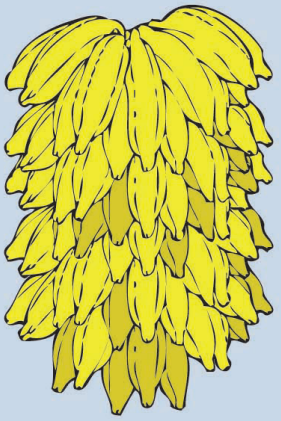
Loving Gaṇeśa is fond of sugarcane; in fact, of all things sweet. Being the Lord all children adore, it is His joy to see their happy eyes light up when they offer Him sugarcane.

मधुकुम्भ

Madhukumbha, Pot of Honey

Loving Gaṇeśa wears a wide smile across His face when devotees place before Him a pot of sticky honey. It is, to Him, like *moksha* itself, the sweetest of all things sweet, worth any effort.

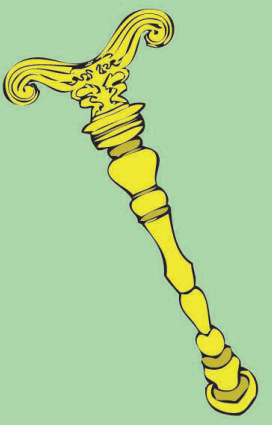
कदलीफल



Kadalīphala, Banana

Loving Gaṇeśa holds in His hand a banana, ripe and ready to eat. He looks at it longingly, yet would give it instantly to any devotee who enjoyed its fragrance.

योगदण्ड



Yogadaṇḍa, Meditation Staff

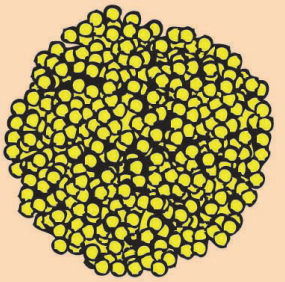
Loving Gaṇeśa rests His arm upon a short staff when talking to devotees and when in deep samādhi. He finds it helps Him meditate more effortlessly, more deeply.

तृण

Tṛiṇa, Grasses

Loving Gaṇeśa knows there are many kinds of animals, little and big. Each needs a special environment and certain life-giving foods, so He protects the grasses, little flowers and seeds.

तिलगोल



Tila Gola, Sesame Ball

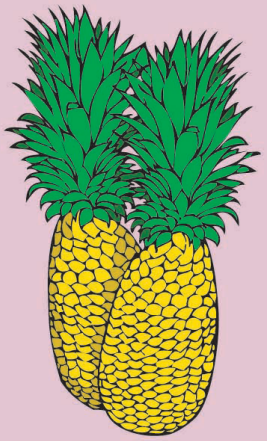
Loving Gaṇeśa teaches us that size may be immense but there is nothing too small to overlook. In His trunk is a sweet goodie made of tiny sesame seeds, and He rides on a tiny mouse.

शुक

Śuka, Parrot

Loving Gaṇeśa delights when the parrot talks and shows he is happy. Perched in Gaṇeśa's hand, he greets all who come and go, giving his opinion when they are alone.

अनन्स



Ananasa, Pineapple

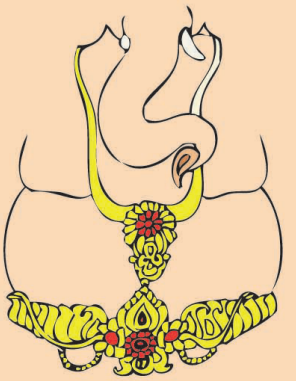
Loving Gaṇeśa holds the pineapple and is ready to slice it to share with those in His aura. Giving and sharing is our lesson from the sweet pineapple that He gives us.

मूषिक

Mūshika, Mouse

Gaṇeśa's companion, a mouse, attests to the all-pervasiveness of the elephant God. Mūshika, the mount or *vāhana*, carries Him into the mind's every nook and cranny.

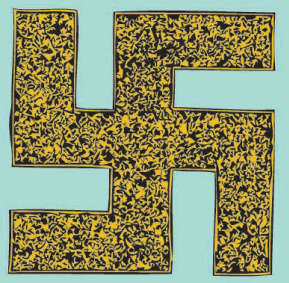
लम्बोदर



Lambodara, Big Belly

Loving Gaṇeśa has this world and all the billions of galaxies in His abundant belly. All known and unknown universes are contained within His prodigious girth.

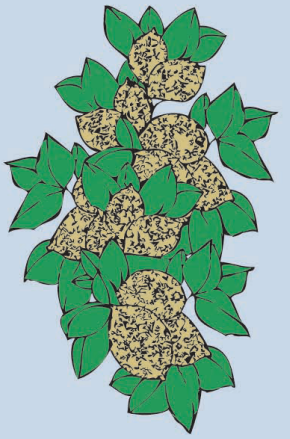
स्वस्तिक



Swastika, Mark of Auspiciousness

Loving Gaṇeśa's good fortunes are represented by the swastika, a sign of luck and auspiciousness. Its crooked arms show how life is filled with change and indirection.

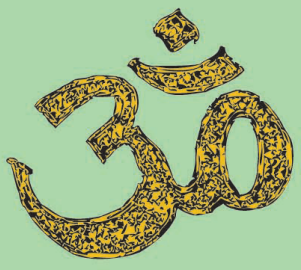
जम्बिर



Jambira, Lime

Loving Gaṇeśa is a practical God, and it is His wish that all who know Him drink the juice of one of His favorite fruits. He wants them to be healthy and enjoy a long life.

ॐ



Aum, Cosmic Sound

Loving Gaṇeśa is Aum. He is the A, the base sound of the universe; He is the U, the sound of the galaxies; and He is the M, the sound of the planets and the littlest stars.

शुण्ड

Śuṇḍā, Elephant Trunk

Loving Gaṇeśa has a versatile trunk, and makes it known that it is a symbol of His capacity to always love His devotees. With it He reaches out to touch each of them.

नीलपद्म

Nīlapadma, Blue Water Lily

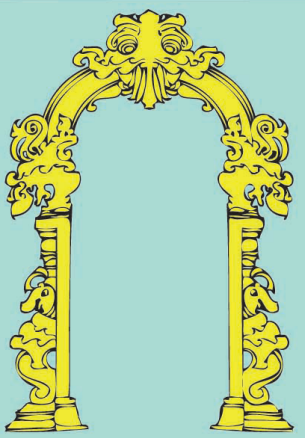
Loving Gaṇeśa often sits by a lily pond, pondering the current state of the universe. His province is to see that all is in order until the next Great Dissolution, *mahāpralaya*.

पनसफल

Panasaphala, Jackfruit

Loving Gaṇeśa's favorite, the jackfruit, is a potato-like vegetable, a chewy nut and sweet yellow fruit all in one. Like the jack's stem, our attachments, though small, are strong.

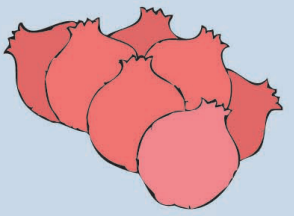
प्रभावली



Prabhāvalī, Fiery Arch

Loving Gaṇeśa sits within an arch depicting creation, preservation and fiery dissolution. Above is the God of time, Mahā-kāla, who ultimately claims everything.

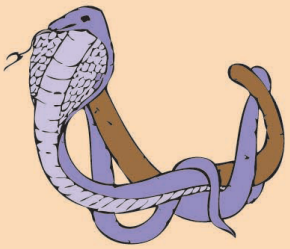
दाडिम



Dāḍima, Pomegranate

Loving Gaṇeśa knows many people like to eat meat and believe it is necessary for health. He offers us red *dāḍimas,* as if saying: "Its many pink seeds are so much better than flesh."

नागपाश



Nāgapāśa, Snake Cord

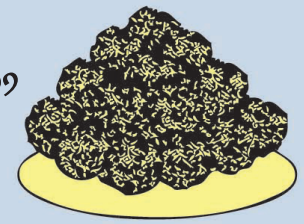
Loving Gaṇeśa wears a snake around His body to tell us all that we have to be like Him and control our instinctive, animal mind. Yes, it is possible through the grace of this God.

कपित्थ

Kapittha, Wood Apple

Loving Gaṇeśa loves wood apples, *kapittha,* called the elephant fruit. Sweet to eat, packaged in a tough shell, it is a pharmacy of āyurveda's secret medicinal potencies.

लड्डु



Laḍḍu, Milk Sweet

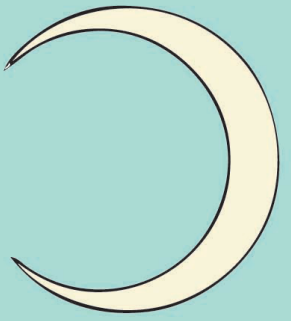
Loving Gaṇeśa was never accused of turning down a *laḍḍu,* rich with milk, flour and sugar. Maybe it reminds Him of being young, as every young one loves sweets.

कवच

Kavacha, Armor

Loving Gaṇeśa's sculpted form in temples and shrines worldwide is encased on festival days in sparkling silver and gold facsimilies. He is fond of splendor, pomp and adulation.

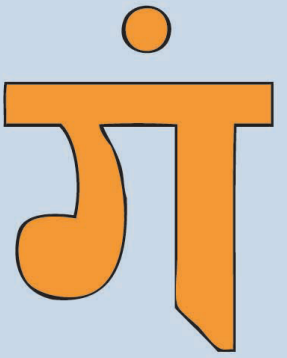
शशिकला



Śaśikalā, Crescent Moon

Loving Gaṇeśa, like His father, Śiva, wears the crescent moon on His great head. It is a symbol of time's passing, of auspicious moments and of the mind's powers.

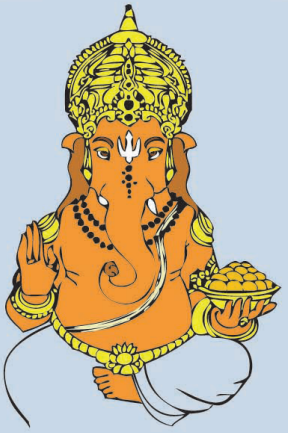
गं मन्त्र



Gaṁ Mantra

Loving Gaṇeśa is invoked by devotees through this mystery mantra. Upon hearing it, He immediately responds. Easy of access, He never delays in solving our problems.

यज्ञोपवीत



Yajñopavīta, Sacred Thread

Loving Gaṇeśa wears across a massive shoulder the holy cord to remind us that we, too, can be twice born through His grace, that none is low and none is high.

जम्बु

Jambu, Rose Apple

Loving Gaṇeśa relishes the rose apple among many other wonderful fruits and vegetables. He shows us the path to good health, harmlessness to creatures and love for all.

पायस

Pāyasa, Pudding

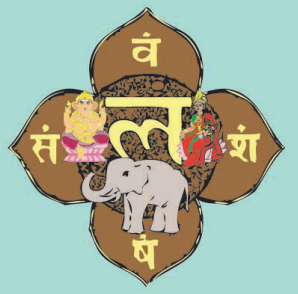
Loving Gaṇeśa is seen from time to time enjoying sweet tapioca pudding, likened to the love and kindness that comes from caring for others as one's very own self.

शक्ति

Śakti, Consort

Loving Gaṇeśa is often seen with two female consorts, or śaktis. They represent *iḍā* and *piṅgalā,* the two life currents, emotion and intellect, that hold us close to Earth.

मूलाधार चक्र



Mūlādhāra Chakra, Base Center

Loving Gaṇeśa, sitting on the four petalled *mūlādhāra,* rules memory and knowledge as the gatekeeper to the six chakras above and the guard of the seven below.

वृक्ष

Vṛiksha, Trees

Loving Gaṇeśa is the protector of forests and giver of gifts from healing trees, the practitioner of āyurveda, the great doctor who helps us gain the knowledge of health from medicinal plants.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Symbol of Auspiciousness

Sulpher crystals, Gafford

Symbol of Auspiciousness

Swastikam

स्वस्तिकम्

GOING BACK FIVE THOUSAND YEARS IN HISTORY, AT THE PORT OF LOthal on India's northern coast of the Arabian Sea, tons of cargo lines the wharves. A trader, inspecting his goods before voyaging to Sumerian cities on the Tigris River, turns an imprinting seal over in his hands, feeling its upraised image of a cross with arms sweeping ninety degrees leftward from each endpoint of the cross. Swiftly he presses the seal into a soft clay tag anchored to a bundle of cotton. The impression is a mirror image of the seal, a right-hand facing swastika. The symbol, so evocative of unending auspiciousness, is also sewn into his sails, just as the swastika also adorns the sails of a ship described in the *Rāmāyaṇa.* The trader is from Hinduism's most ancient known civilization: the Indus Valley in northwest India. The seal rests today in a museum and is the oldest surviving representation of the swastika, a Sanskrit word meaning "good being, fortune or augury," literally "conducive to well-being," derived from *su,* "well" and *astu,* "may it be," or "be it so."

For Hindus the swastika is a lucky cross associated with the good fortunes given by Lord Gaṇeśa. It also represents the sun and the cycle of life. This ancient benign symbol is used today by housewives to guard thresholds and doors, by priests to sanctify ceremonies and offerings, and by businessmen to bless the opening pages of account books each New Year's day. No ceremony or sacrifice is considered complete without it, for it is believed to have the power to ward off misfortune and negative forces. A series of small swastikas is a favorite border pattern for textiles. In Mahārāshṭra, the rainy season is especially devoted to its honor, when it is drawn on the floor in elaborate patterns using colorful powders and flower petals.

It is said that the swastika's right-angled arms reflect the fact that the path toward our objectives is often not straight, but takes unexpected turns. They denote also the indirect way in which Divinity is reached—through intuition and not by intellect. Symbolically, the *swastika's* cross is said to represent God and creation. The four bent arms stand for the four human aims, *purushārtha:* righteousness, dharma; wealth, *artha;* love, kāma; and liberation, *moksha.* Thus it is a potent emblem of Sanātana Dharma, the eternal truth. It also represents the world wheel, eternally turning around a fixed center, God. The swastika is

associated with the *mūlādhāra* chakra, the center of consciousness at the base of the spine, and in some yoga schools with the *maṇipūra* chakra at the navel, the center of the microcosmic sun (sūrya).

Throughout Earth's Cultures

The swastika is a sacred sign of prosperity and auspiciousness, perhaps the single most common emblem in Earth cultures. As the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* explains, "It was a favorite symbol on ancient Mesopotamian coinage; it appeared in early Christian and Byzantine art (where it became known as the gammadion cross because its arms resemble the Greek letter gamma, Γ); and it occurred in South and Central America (among the Mayans) and in North America (principally among the Navajos). In India it continues to be the most widely used auspicious symbol of Hindus, Jainas and Buddhists."

When Buddhism emerged from India's spiritual wellspring, it inherited the right-angled emblem. Carried by monks, the good-luck design journeyed north over the Himalayas into China, often carved in statues into Buddha's feet and splayed into a spectrum of decorative meandering or interconnecting swastikas. On the other side of the planet, American Indians inscribed the spoked sign of good luck into salmon-colored seashells, healing sticks, pottery, woven garments and blankets. Two thousand miles south, the Mayans of the Yucatan chiseled it into temple diagrams. Once moored to the ancient highland cultures of Asia Minor, the emblem later voyaged around the Mediterranean, through Egypt and Greece, northward into Saxon lands and Scandinavia and west to Scotland and Ireland.

Nineteenth-century Americans picked up the symbol from the American Indians. Boy Scouts wore brassy swastika belt buckles, and a US World's Fair early last century minted flashy swastika commemorative coins. It was displayed in jewelry and inscribed on souvenirs, light fixtures, postcards and playing cards. In the 1920s and early 30s the swastika was the emblem of the United States' 45th Infantry Division, proudly worn by soldiers on their left shoulder as an ancient good-luck symbol, in yellow on a square red background. The emblem was changed to an Native American thunderbird in the 1930s. Canada has a town called Swastika, 360 miles north of Toronto, named in 1911 after a rich gold mine. When WWII broke out, the townsfolk withstood pressures from the federal government to change the name to Winston.

Misappropriated by the German Nazis

In the 1930s, when Adolf Hitler's Nazi Third Reich rose to power in Germany and engulfed the planet in World War II, the fortunes of the swastika declined. From September 1935 to the fall of the Nazis in 1945, it was displayed on the Reich's official flag, a black swastika in a white circle against a red field. German soldiers also wore the hackenkrenz ("hooked cross") on their uniforms, in a circle beneath an eagle, and displayed it on their armory. In the West it became an infamous, hated symbol of fascism and anti-Semitism and was banned by the Allied Command at the war's end, though the swastika's history is as extensive in the West as in Asia.

Tracking the Swastika's Left and Right Forms

The swastika has throughout history mutated into a wide diversity of forms and meanings, but in its Hindu usage the right-hand swastika is far more prevalent and ancient than its left-hand counterpart.

Next to the Indus seal, the oldest Indian *swastika* motif appears abundantly on the early Buddhist sculptures, a period when Buddha was not depicted in human form—only by his footprints surrounded by dozens of right-hand swastikas. Similarly, the Jain emblem for their seventh Tīrthaṅkara (pathfinder) is the symbol of the sun, the right-turning swastika. In Malaysia, Sikh shrines all have right-hand swastikas as mystical ornamentation. In some sources, neither swastika was assigned a negative connotation: the right-hand was a spring solar, male symbol and the left was an autumn solar, female mark. As the tantric sciences of Śaivism and Śāktism bifurcated into left-hand and right-hand paths (the *vāma* and *dakshiṇa*), the swastika may have followed into black or white mysticism and magic.

The search for a pre-World War II treatise on the swastika struck gold with a book entitled *The Swastika: the Earliest Known Symbol and its Migrations,* by Thomas Wilson, a curator of the US National Museum. Written in 1894 for the Smithsonian Institute, the work opens with a right-hand swastika on the title page and presents an exhaustive survey of the global dispersion of this symbol, from the Navajo tribes of North America to Egypt, ancient Troy and the Taoists of China.

Among other Oriental scholars quoted in the book is Max Müller, the German professor at Oxford and *Veda* translator who introduced the word *Aryan* to the European intelligentsia. It was through Müller that *Aryan* was first

imbued with a sense of race rather than an attribute of virtuous, spiritual nobility. Wilson writes, "Prof. Max Müller makes the symbol different according as the arms are bent to the right or left. That bent to the right he denominates the true swastika, that bent to the left he calls *suavastika*, but he gives no authority for the statement." After examining the positions of dozens of scholars, Wilson concludes, "Therefore, the normal swastika would seem to be that with the ends bent to the right."

Wilson's book pictorially surveys the dispersion of the swastika symbol, region by region. Indeed, so broadly cast is the symbol in the early ages of human society that Wilson determines it is impossible to trace the swastika's origin. Wilson's exploration of European use of the swastika prior to 1894 is an eye-opener. In the section "Germany and Austria" we are treated to ten samples of the swastika (now displayed in museums) that are designed into filigree screens, used to ornament burial urns and spearheads, and fashioned into broach and pin jewelry. They orient both right and left, with a preference to the right. The entirety of runic Europe was covered with swastikas, both in ornamentation and in some of their best-preserved Teutonic inscriptions to the old Gods.

The Right-Hand Swastika

The swastika is an emblem of geometric perfection. In the mind's eye it can be stable and still or whirl in perpetual motion, its arms rotating one after another like a cosmic pinwheel. It is unknown why and how the term *swastika,* "may it be good," was wedded to this most ancient and pervasive of symbols. Most authorities designate the right-hand swastika as a solar emblem, capturing the sun's path from east to west, a clockwise motion. One theory says it represents the outward dispersion of the universe. One of its finest meanings is that transcendent reality is not attained directly through the logic of the mind, but indirectly and mysteriously through the intuitive, cosmic mind. Though Hindus usually use the swastika straight up and down, other cultures rotated it at various angles.

The Left-Handed Swastika

The left-hand swastika appears in many cultures, including Hindu. It often is used interchangeably with the right-hand version, though the majority of Hindus employ the right-facing form. One school sees this swastika as that which rotates clockwise because a wind blowing across its face would catch the arms and rotate it to the right. But this is an unusual interpretation. Most see it as rotating anti-clockwise, as the arms point as such. Some say this form signifies the universe imploding back into its essence. It has been associated with the *vāma,* left-handed, mystic path that employs sensual indulgence and powerful Śākta rites, with night, with the Goddess Kālī and with magical practices. Another interpretation is that it represents the autumn solar route, a time of dormancy.

The Swastika after Hitler

Because of its infamous association with the Third Reich, the swastika was and still is abhorred by many inside and outside of Germany, still held in disparagement and misunderstanding, which itself is understandable though unfortunate. Now is a time for this to change, for a return to this solar symbol's pure and happy beginnings. Ironically, even now Hindus managing temples in Germany innocently display on walls and entryways the swastika, the ancient symbol of Lord Gaṇeśa and more recently the hated insigne of Nazism, alongside the *shaṭkona,* six-pointed star, the ancient symbol representing God Śiva and Lord Kārttikeya and as Star of David, the not so ancient but cherished already for centuries emblem of Judaism.

Swastika and the Chakras

From a mystically occult point of view the swastika is a type of *yantra,* a psychic diagram representing the four-petalled *mūlādhāra* chakra located at the base of the spine within everyone. The chakras are nerve plexuses or centers of force and consciousness located within the inner bodies of man. In the physical body there are corresponding nerve plexuses, ganglia and glands. The seven principal chakras can be seen psychically as colorful, multi-petalled wheels or lotuses situated along the spinal cord. The seven lower chakras, barely visible, exist below the spine.

CHAKRAS ABOVE THE BASE OF THE SPINE

14) *sahasrāra*	crown of head	illumination
13) *ājñā*	third eye	divine sight
12) *viśuddha*	throat	divine love
11) *anāhata*	heart center	direct cognition
10) *maṇipūra*	solar plexus	willpower
9) *svādhishṭhāna*	below navel	reason
8) *mūlādhāra*	base of spine	memory/time/space

CHAKRAS BELOW THE BASE OF THE SPINE

7) *atala*	hips	fear and lust
6) *vitala*	thighs	raging anger
5) *sutala*	knees	retaliatory jealousy
4) *talātala*	calves	prolonged confusion
3) *rasātala*	ankles	selfishness
2) *mahātala*	feet	absence of conscience
1) *pātāla*	soles of feet	malice and murder

Śivāchārya priests, adept in temple mysticism, testify that when they tap the sides of their head with their fists several times at the outset of pūjā, they are actually causing the *amṛita,* the divine nectar, to flow from the *sahasrāra* chakra at the top of their head, thus giving *abhisheka,* ritual anointment, to Lord Gaṇeśa seated upon the *mūlādhāra* chakra at the base of the spine.

The Soul's Evolution through the Chakras

Devotees sometimes ask, "Why is it that some souls are apparently more advanced than others, less prone to the lower emotions that are attributes of the lower chakras?" The answer is that souls are not created all at once. Lord Śiva is continually creating souls. Souls created a long time ago are old souls. Souls created not so long ago are young souls. We recognize an old soul as being refined, selfless, compassionate, virtuous, controlled in body, mind and emotions, radiating goodness in thought, word and deed. We recognize a young soul by his strong instinctive nature, selfishness, lack of understanding and absence of physical, mental and emotional refinement.

At any given time there are souls of every level of evolution. My *satguru,* Sage Yogaswami, taught that "The world is a training school. Some are in kindergarten. Some are in the B.A. class." Each soul is created in the Third World and evolves by taking on denser and denser bodies until it has a physical body and lives in the First World, the physical plane. Then as it matures, it drops off these denser bodies and returns to the Second and Third Worlds, the astral and causal planes.

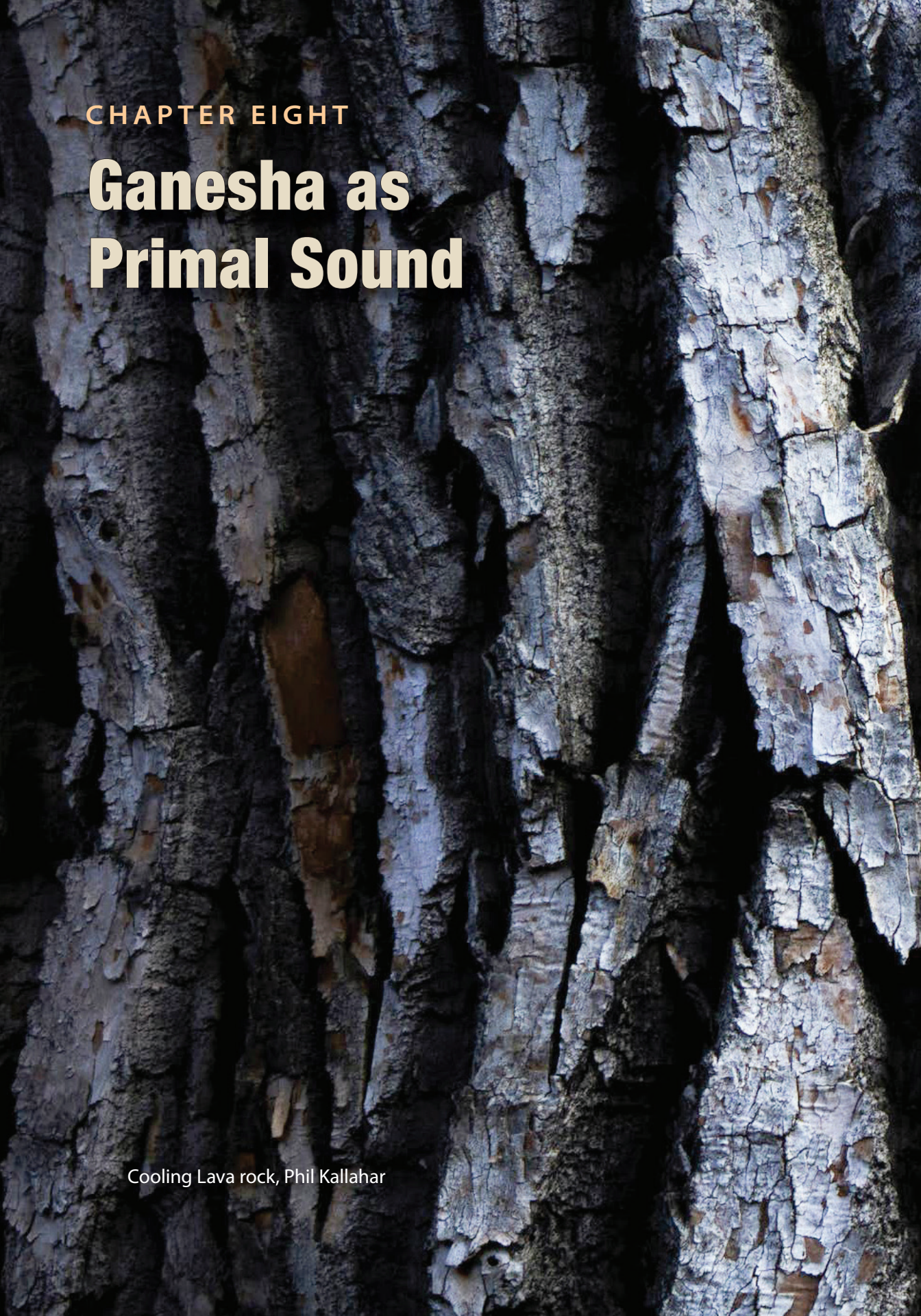
This process of maturation, occurring over many, many lifetimes, is the unfoldment of consciousness through the chakras. First the young soul slowly matures through the *pātāla, mahātala, rasātala* and the *talātala* chakras. Such individuals plague established society with their erratic, *adharmic* ways. Between births, on the astral plane, they are naturally among the *asuras,* making mischief and taking joy in the torment of others. When lifted up into jealousy, in the *sutāla* chakra, there is some focus of consciousness, and the desires of malice subside. Finally, the *pātāla* chakra sleeps. Later, when the *sutāla* forces of jealousy are thwarted, the young soul arises into anger, experiencing fits of rage at the slightest provocation. As a result of being disciplined by society through its laws and customs, the individual slowly gains control of his forces; and a conscience begins to develop. It is at this stage that a fear of God and the Gods begins to manifest. Now, totally lifted up into the *atala* chakra, seventh of the fourteen force centers, the individual emerges into the consciousness of the *mūlādhāra,* the seat of the elephant God; and several of the chakras below cease to function. Here begins the long process of unfoldment through the higher chakras, a process outlined in Śaiva Siddhanta as the progressive path of *charyā,* kriyā, yoga and jñāna.

Thus, through hundreds of lifetimes and hundreds of periods between births, the *asura* becomes the deva, and the deva becomes the Mahādeva until complete and ultimate merger with Śiva, *viśvagrāsa*. Individuality is lost as the soul becomes Śiva, the creator, preserver, destroyer, veiler and revealer. Individual identity expands into universality.

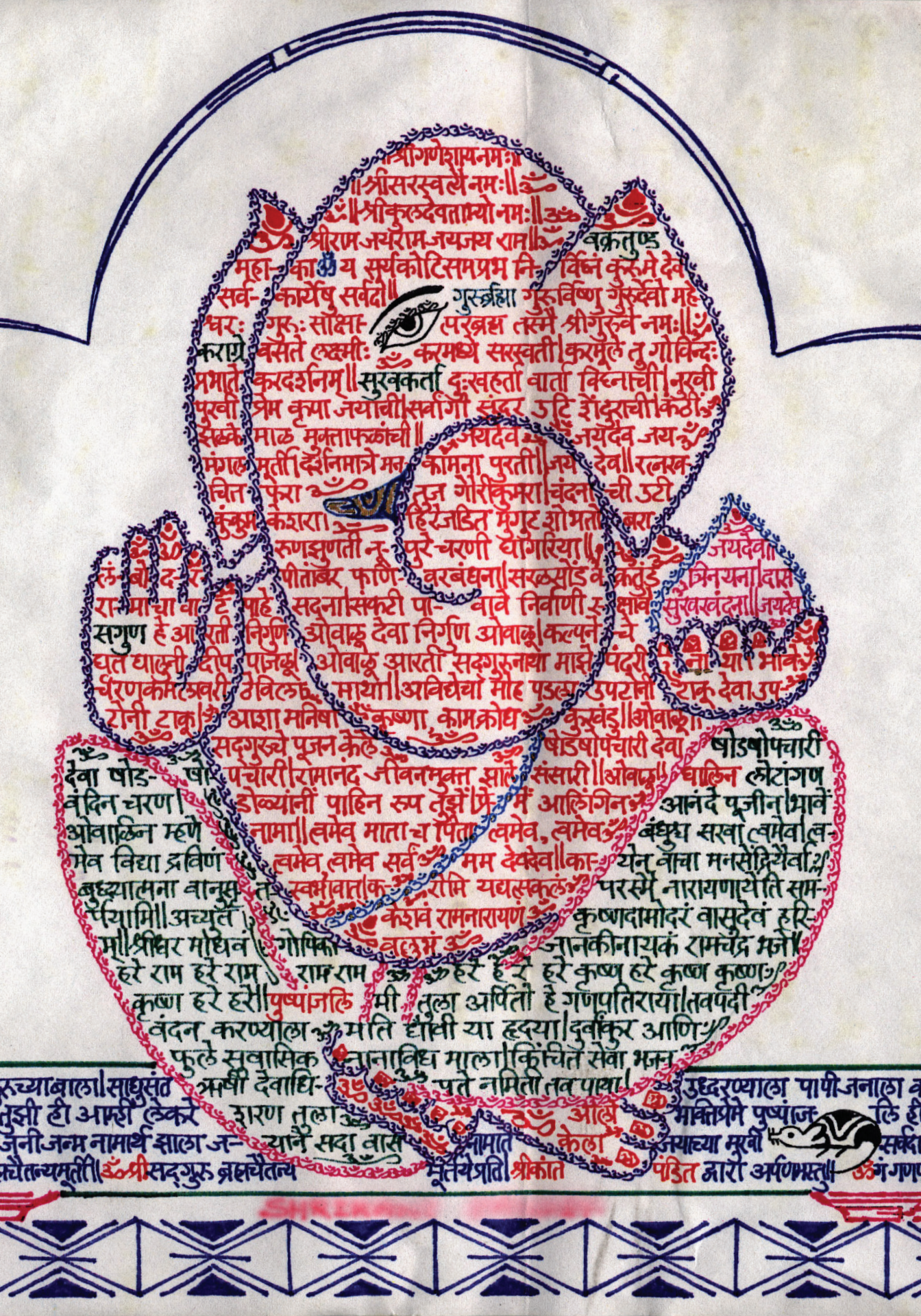
Our loving Gaṇeśa, sitting on the *mūlādhāra* chakra, signified by the swastika, is "there for us" throughout our evolution from one set of four chakras to the next until all seven of the highest are functioning properly. He and His brother, Lord Murugan, work closely together to bring us all to Lord Śiva's feet, into His heart, until *jīva* becomes Śiva.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Ganesha as Primal Sound



Cooling Lava rock, Phil Kallahar


श्रीगणेशाय नमः
श्रीसरस्वत्यै नमः
श्रीकुलदेवतायै नमः
श्रीराम जयराम जयजय राम
वक्रतुण्ड
महा-
काय सूर्यकोटिसमप्रभ नि-
विघ्नं कुरुमे देव
सर्व-
कार्येषु सर्वदा
गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णु गुरुर्देवो महे
श्वरः गुरुः साक्षा-
त्परब्रह्म तस्मै श्रीगुरुवे नमः
कराग्रे
वसते लक्ष्मीः
करमध्ये सरस्वती
करमूले तु गोविन्दः
प्रभाते
करदर्शनम्
सुखकर्ता दुःखहर्ता वार्ता विघ्नाची
पुरवी
प्रेम कृपा जयाची
सर्वांगी सुंदर उटि शेंदुराची
कंठी
झळके
माळ मुक्ताफळांची
जयदेव जयदेव जय
मंगल
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कामना पुरती
जय देव
रत्नख-
चित
पेरा
तुज गौरिकुमरा
चंदना
ची उटी
कुंकुम
केशरा
हिरेजडित मुगुट शोभतो
बरा
रुणझुणती नू-
पुरे चरणी घागरिया
जयदेव
पीतांबर फणि-
वरबंधना
सरळसोंड
वक्रतुंड
त्रिनयना
दास
रामाचा वाट
पाहे
सदना
संकटी पा-
वावे निर्वाणी
क्षणी
सुखकंदा
जयदेव
सगुण हे आरती
निर्गुण ओवाळू देवा निर्गुण ओवाळू
कल्पने
चे
घृत घाली दीप
पाजळू
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पंढरी
भाव
चरणकमलांवरी
ठेविले
माथा
अविद्येचा मोह पडला
उपटोनी
टाकू देवा उप-
रोनी टाकू
आशा मनिषा
कृष्णा
कामक्रोध
कुखंडू
ओवाळू
सद्गुरुचे पूजन केले
षोडषोपचारी देवा
षोडषोपचारी
देवा षोड-
षो-
पचारी
रामानंद जीवनमुक्त झाले
संसारी
ओवाळू
घालिन लोटांगण
वंदिन चरण
डोळ्यांनी पाहिन रूप तुझें
प्रेमें आलिंगिन
आनंदे पूजीन भावें
ओवाळिन म्हणे
नामा
त्वमेव माता च पिता त्वमेव
त्वमेव
बंधुश्च सखा त्वमेव त्व-
मेव विद्या द्रविणं
त्वमेव त्वमेव सर्वं
मम देवदेव
का-
येन वाचा मनसेंद्रियैर्वा
बुध्यात्मना वानुस
त-
स्वभावात्क
रोमि यद्यत्सकलं
परस्मै नारायणायेति सम-
र्पयामि
अच्युत
केशव रामनारायण
कृष्णदामोदर वासुदेव हरि-
श्रीधर माधव
गोपिका
वल्लभ
जानकीनायक रामचंद्र भजे
हरे राम हरे राम
राम राम
हरे हरे हरे कृष्ण हरे कृष्ण कृष्ण
कृष्ण हरे हरे
पुष्पांजलि
मी तुला अर्पितो हे गणपतिराया
तवपदी
वंदन करण्याला
मति दीधली या हृदया
दुर्वांकुर आणि
फुले सुवासिक
नानाविध माला
किंचित सेवा भजन
रुच्या बाला
साधुसंत
ऋषी देवादि-
पते नमितो तव पाया
उद्धरण्याला पापी जनाला
तुझी ही आम्ही लेकरे
शरण तुला
भक्तिप्रेमे पुष्पांज-
जनी जन्म नामार्थ झाला ज-
यानें सदा वास
जयाच्या मुखी
चैतन्यमूर्ती
श्रीसद्गुरु ब्रह्मचैतन्य
मूर्तये प्रति
श्रीकांत
पंडित द्वारा अर्पणमस्तु
गं गण

Gaṇeśa as Primal Sound

Gaṇeśaḥ Praṇavātmakaḥ

गणेशः प्रणवात्मकः

By Ratna Ma Navaratnam, from *Oṁ Gaṇeśa: the Peace of God*

OMAGE TO GAṆAPATI. THERE ARE MANY APPROACHES TO TRUTH. OṀ Gaṇeśa is one such approach. Here we have an attitude and spirit that can make it possible for the human race to grow together into a single family. Gaṇeśa Oṁ is efficacious because it flows from a true vision of spiritual reality.

In the *Vedas,* there are references to Gaṇapati, the lord of the gaṇas, the attendants of Śiva. That there is no difference between Lord Śiva and Gaṇapati is brought out in the Ṛg Vedic mantras recited before the great Śrī Rudram hymn from the *Yajur Veda Samhita.*

Gaṇānāṁ tvā gaṇapatigṁ havāmahe
kaviṁ kavīnāmupamaśravastamam |
jyeṣṭharājaṁ brahmaṇāṁ brahmaṇaspata
ā naḥ śṛṇvannūtibhiḥsīdasādanam ||

The Deity who is hailed as the chief of the celestial hosts (Gaṇapati) here is called Brahmaṇaspati. However, the descriptive epithets applied to Him are apposite as well to the elephant-faced God as Kaviṅkavīnām, the Seer of seers, Gaṇapati being the God of wisdom par excellence, and Jyeshṭharājam, the Vināyaka commanding precedence over others.

Also, in verse one of the *Gaṇeśa Pañcharatna* by Śrīi Adi Shankara is found the reference: *kalādharāvataṁsakam,* "He who dons the crescent," which attribute is also applied to Śiva.

The Vedic seers were not only familiar with Gaṇapati worship, but they assigned Him a special place among the Gods, and He was propitiated to bestow success and enjoyment and to avert obstacles and calamities. Various prayers to Gaṇeśa are found in the Vedic texts. He is invoked as the Principal of principals:

गणानां त्वा गणपतिग्ं हवामहे कविं कवीनामुपमश्रवस्तमं ।
ज्येष्ठराजं ब्रह्मणां ब्रह्मणस्पत आ नः शृण्वन्नूतिभिः सीद सादनं ॥

Gaṇānāṁ tvā gaṇapatigṁ havāmahe
kaviṁ kavīnāmupamaśravastamam |
jyeṣṭharājaṁ brahmaṇāṁ brahmaṇaspata
ā naḥ śṛṇvannūtibhiḥsīdasādanam ||

O Gaṇapati, the Seer of seers, unrivalled in wealth,
King of elders, Principal of principals.
Hear us and take Thy place,
bringing with Thee all enjoyments.

Ṛg Veda, 2.23.1

In *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 10.4.56, the Son of God, "a second myself," *dvitiya ātma,* is spoken of as *mithuna:* the "word not spoken." God's unspoken word is internal and unmanifest. Gaṇeśa thus came to be recognized as the "God Word." The Son is the testimony of the immanence of God being generated eternally. Gaṇeśa reflects the wisdom of His Father and is the repository of the word of God.

In the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* is a clear reference to Gaṇapati as Dantim (tusker). This word occurs in the Gāyatrī sacred to Gaṇapati:

Tanno dantiḥ pracodayāt.
Let that Tusker illumine our thoughts.

In the beginning is the Word. That Word is Aum, and the resonance of Aum is heard everywhere. *Aum Tat Sat.* That is what It is. So declare the *Vedāgamas.*

That word is Aum. This syllable is the imperishable spirit,
This indeed is the highest end. Knowing this syllable, truly indeed,
Whatsoever one desires will be his.… That is the Supreme Support,
Knowing that support, One becomes happy in the Brahma world.

Kaṭha Upanishad 2.15-16

This audible symbol Aum serves as a support of contemplation.
One infers the unseen in the seen, the unheard in the heard.

Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy

We sing in praise of Him
Who is the essence of Omkāram.

Satguru Yogaswami's Natchintanai

The Causal Word, Aum, represents the divine thought, the source of existence. It corresponds to the power of will, known as Śiva Intention, or *icçhā*

śakti. The power of knowledge known as Vishṇu Formulation, or jñāna śakti, and the power of action known as Brahmā Expression, or *kriyā śakti,* also express the Causal Word, Aum.

Omkāra signifies the Supreme Śivam, being both *vyashṭi* (individual) and *samashṭi* (cosmic). Thus, Gaṇeśa Aum, the divine son of Śiva, is the support of the whole universe. His sound-symbol Aum is indestructible in past, present and future. It is immortal and ageless. He is ever Pillaiyar, the cherished child of Umā-Parameśvara. By meditating on Him in the three aspects of A-U-M, devotees can realize the reality of the Godhead. The *mahāvākya* Aum Tat Sat implies "That is what it is," and it is transmuted into the form of Gaṇeśa. He embodies the Truth of Tat Tvam Asi, "Thou art That."

Everything that our mind can grasp can be expressed in terms of kind or category. So, category is a fundamental element of existence. All that can be counted or comprehended is a category *(gaṇa).* The principle of classifications through which the relations can be understood between different orders of things, between the macrocosm and the microcosm, is called the Lord of Categories. He is Gaṇapati.

Mahāgaṇapati is the ruler of all the categories and can be identified with Divinity in its perceptible manifestation. He guards the first approach to life and all its manifold unfoldment.

> I bow to you Gaṇapati, Lord of categories.
> You along are the visible form of the principle of All, the
> true Self. O Lord of categories, Thou art the Lord. Here us
> and take thy place and bring with thee all enjoyments.
>
> *Ṛg Veda, 2.31.1*

The principle of categories transcends intellect. As the Lord of categories, Gaṇapati rules over the universal intellect and the principles of the elements *(tattvas)* derived from it.

It is noteworthy that Gaṇapati is sometimes identified with Bṛihaspati, the patron of letters. Mythologically, He is the scribe who writes down the scriptures. He figures as the scribe of Sage Vyāsa, the author of the *Mahābhārata.*

> You, leader of categories,
> are the writer of this *Mahābhārata.*
>
> *Mahābhārata* 1.1.77

Microcosm and Macrocosm

Gaṇeśa also stands for one of the basic concepts of Hindu mythological symbolism—the identity of the macrocosm and the microcosm. In our religious tradition, the remembrance of the divinity of man and the immanence of God must be present before the doer of any action. In this way a Hindu learns to bow to Gaṇeśa at every turn. Not only is He worshiped at the beginning of every undertaking, but He guards the entrance of every house, of every temple and business establishment in the land of the Hindus. Aum Gaṇeśa is what He is: the master guide of devotees to realize their Divinity.

The identity of the macrocosm and the microcosm can be observed in the permanence of the relations formed as the substratum of all the aspects of the perceptible universe. Pillaiyar, as he is fondly called by the Śaivites, is represented as elephant-headed to express the unity of the small being, the microcosm that is man, and the great being, the macrocosm, pictured as an elephant. The word *Gaja,* meaning elephant, is taken to mean "the origin and the goal." The stage reached by the reintegrated being, the yogī, in his experience of ultimate identification *(samādhi)* is called *Ga,* the goal; and the principle called *Ja,* the origin, is that from which the syllable *AUM* is said to be issued through a process of multifold reflection.

The man-part of Gaṇapati, representing the manifest principle, is subordinate to the unmanifest, shown as the elephant, which is the head. In symbols depicting Divinity, opposites can coexist. Hence man and elephant are combined in Gaṇapati's symbol, which leads to its essential meaning of Praṇava.

The elephant is also a symbol of the stage whence existence begins *(Brahmasūtra* 1.1.4) and whence the syllable *Aum* issues. From Aum issues the *Veda,* the universal law, and from the *Veda,* the universe. *Prāṇa* is the life current, and *Va* is the energy of Śiva named *Chit Śakti.* When they mingle in the vibration of *Prāṇa-Va,* Gaṇeśa reveals Himself. *Aum Tat Sat Aum* is His sacred message. The living beings are the visible form of That, the Supreme Reality. Human existence denotes the coordination of the Absolute and the relative, of That and Thou.

> That (Tat) represents the limitless, transcendent
> principle whose (nature) is Truth and Knowledge."
>
> *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* 8.1.1

The Letters of Aum

True knowledge is the realization of this unity which Gaṇeśa signifies. Aum is commonly attributed to the form of Gaṇeśa, the Lord of the Praṇava Mantra,

even though the three letters A-U-M signify a number of God's names when taken separately. *A* stands for Virat, Agni and Viśva. *U* stands for Hiraṇyagarbha, Vāyu and Taijasa. *M* represents Īśvara, Āditya and Prajña.

Virat is the all-comprehensive universe of being. *Agni* is the primary element of all sacrificial ceremonies. *Viśva* means God Śiva, since the whole universe and the objects in the universe are manifested and are sheltered in Him. He pervades all of them.

Hiraṇyagarbha is One who is the source and support of all light and luminous bodies as the sun, moon and stars. *Vāyu* means one who is the life and support of the universe, the cause of its dissolution. Taijasa is one who is resplendent and gives light to the Sun and other luminous bodies.

Īśvara is one whose knowledge and power are infinite. *Āditya* means immortal. *Prajña* denotes one whose knowledge is perfect and one who is omniscient.

Thus, the sacred syllable *Aum* combines within itself some of the most sublime names of the Supreme Being, and connotes His omnipotent and omniscient nature and attributes. Aum thus represents, in its fullest connotation, God, the Supreme Being.

Akṣaram Brahma Paramam
Svabhavo Adhyātmamucyate.
Bhagavad Gītā 8.3

Brahman is spoken of as Akshara: that which is imperishable and inexhaustible. Saint Auvaiyar also referred to Akshara, meaning eternal wisdom, in her famous poem on Vināyaka.

Kṛishṇa tells Arjuna in the following verse that he who leaves the body reflecting on Aum reaches the goal of beatific bliss, *Paramam gatim.*

Oṁ Ityekākṣaram Brahma
Vyāharan mām anusmaran
Yaḥ prayāti tyajan deham
Sa yāti paramām gatim.
Bhagavad Gītā 8.13

Aum is the Ekākshara, the one-lettered mantra of the Paraśivam, the word not spoken. Mantra is that which redeems when contemplated upon:

Mananāt thrāyate itimantra.

The Son of Śiva, Gaṇeśa, being "a second myself," came to be recognized as the God Word *Aum.*

When we chant the Praṇava Aum—the harmonious combination of the three basic sounds, *akara, ukara* and *makara*—the microcosmic activity links with the entire macrocosmic activity of the cosmos, which represents the all-pervading Reality of Paraśiva.

*Akāra s*ound is produced from the base of the spinal cord, where the kuṇḍalinī is posited, and rises to the throat. The supreme consciousness *(chaitanya),* functioning through the gross body in the waking state in the individual, is called *vaiśvānara* and is represented by the first syllable, *A.*

Ukāra is the second stage, where the sound from the throat is rolled outwards to the tip of the tongue. The same supreme consciousness, functioning through the subtle body in the dream state in the individual, is called *taijasa,* and is represented by the second syllable, *U.*

Makāra sound is concentrated at the lips. This same supreme consciousness, functioning through the causal body in the deep sleep state in the individual, is called *prajña,* and is represented by the final syllable, *M,* in *AUM.*

The significance of the *Aum* mantra is also brought out lucidly in the *śīkshāvalli* of the *Taittirīya Upanishad:*

> *Oṁ iti brahma, Oṁ itīdaṁ sarvam*
> *Oṁ ityetad anukṛti, Oṁ iti sāmāni gāyanti (1.8).*

And in the *Ç*handogya *Upanishad:*

> *Oṁ ityetadakṣaram udgītham upāsīta*
> *Oṁ iti hyudgāyati tasyopa vyākhyānam (1.1.1).*

The image of Gaṇapati and His mantra Aum constantly remind us of the reality of the great identity. Man truly is the image of the cosmos. All realization lies within himself. Through the study of his inner impulses and of his inner structure, he can understand the nature of the universe. Lord Vighneśvara assures the freedom from fear. He instills the knowledge necessary to remove the fear inherent in time and duration. What power lies hidden in the mystic Aum, the sound symbol of Gaṇapati, and which is uttered at the beginning of every rite! Its meaning is expressed in Aum Tat Sat and represents the fundamental identity of the macrocosm and the microcosm.

Aum Symbols of Gaṇeśa

The swastika forms the graphic symbol of Gaṇapati. It is represented by a cross, being the development of the multiple from the basic unity, the central point; but each of its branches is bent so that it does not aim at the center. This is

intended to show that man cannot reach the basic unity directly through the outward forms of the universe.

Gaṇeśa's trunk is bent because Divinity cannot be directly understood and also because He is master of obstacles. The noose in His hand destroys *moha,* delusion, the enemy of all seekers. The driving hook is the insignia of the ruler of the universe. The hand granting boons fulfills all desires, and the other hand allays all fears. Man seeks Gaṇeśa's protection at every turn in order that the Great Being may establish Itself in his midst, and he may become one with It.

That Transcendental One is Aum Gaṇeśa. That Immanent One is Aum Gaṇeśa. The living beings are Gaṇeśa Aum. Thus do we raise the chant of concord, Aum Gaṇeśa Tat Sat Aum.

A Graphic Collection of Thirty-Seven Aums

On the following pages the editors of *Loving Gaṇeśa* have assembled a special collection of Aum calligraphy gathered at our Kauai monastery over the past few years. They are mostly drawn in Devanāgarī, but also in some of India's regional scripts. Of all the sacred symbols from India's rich spiritual heritage, none is more widely used and loved than the Aum. It is Divinity incarnate, and so it is natural that calligraphers and artists, designers and wall painters use it again and again to express the highest Truth.

We take great joy in sharing our world-class collection of Aums (and other Indian art forms, like Gaṇeśas, village artistry and more). Now the entire collection has been indexed and made available to everyone through HAMSA, the Himalayan Academy Museum of Spiritual Art. In Sanskrit, *hamsa* names the Indian goose (Anser indicus) or a swan. It represents the Ultimate Reality and the spiritually pure soul. The flight of the hamsa symbolizes moksha—the release from samsara, the cycle of birth, death and rebirth, and the start of our soul's continued evolution in the inner worlds.

Indian spiritual art has no equal in the world for scope, sheer quantity, devotion and philosophical significance. To peruse (and download) the thousands of images available at HAMSA, go to www.himalayanacademy.com/hamsa. In addition to hundreds of Aums, you will find rare masterpieces, sacred religious symbols, illustrated alphabets, decorative borders, educational depictions of Hindu Deities, culture, philosophy, legend, children's stories, and much, much more.

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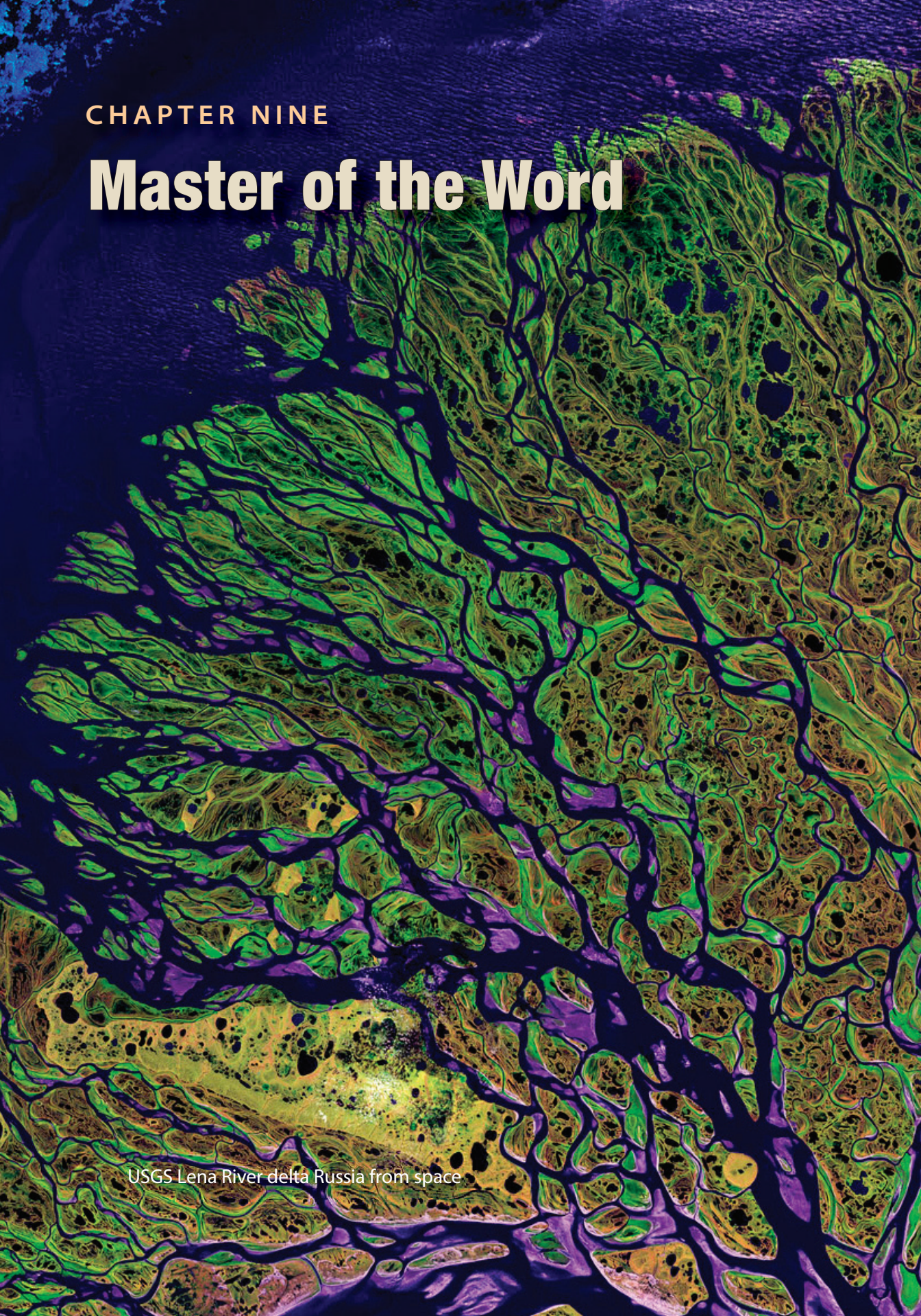
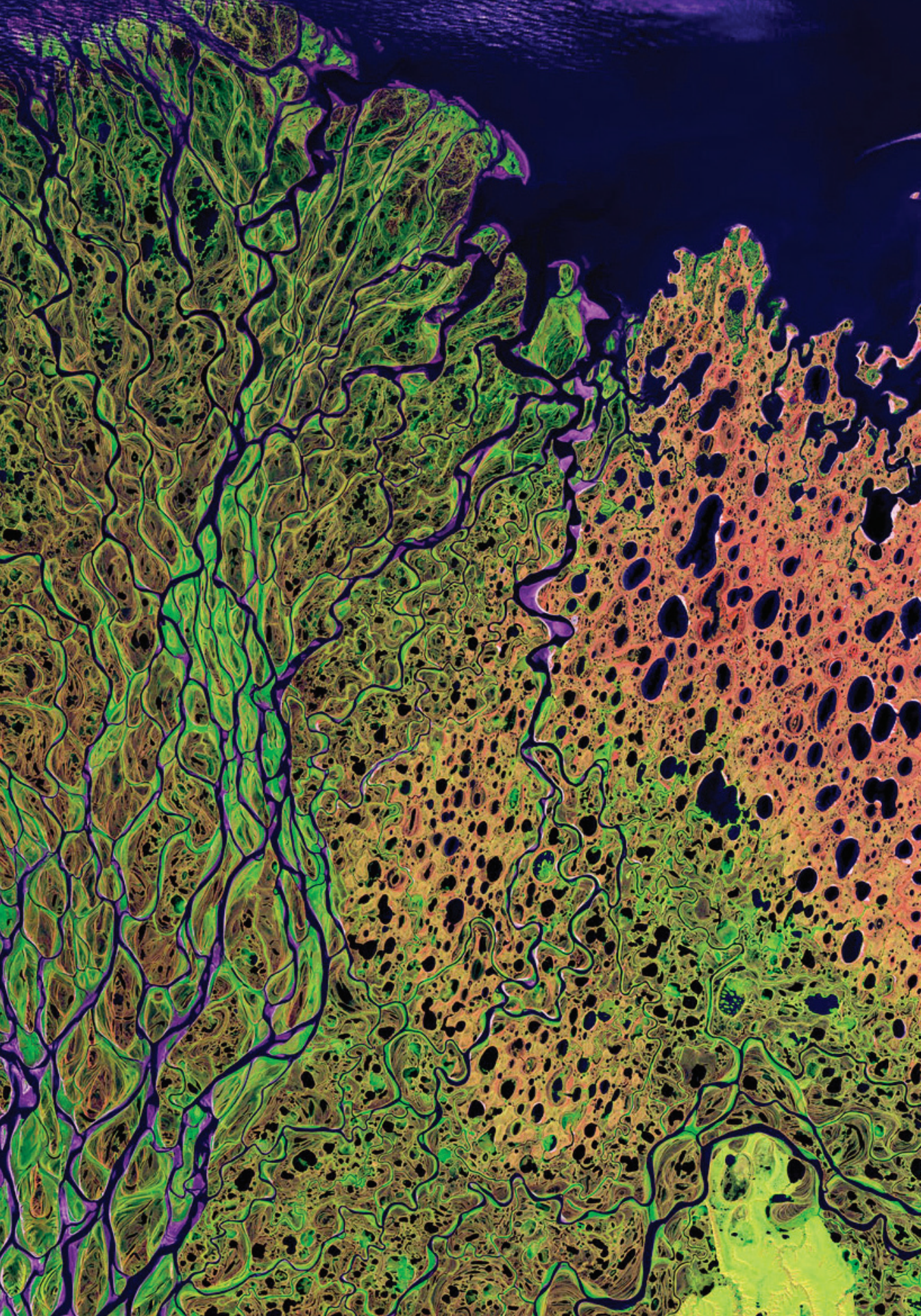
CHAPTER NINE

Master of the Word



USGS Lena River delta Russia from space

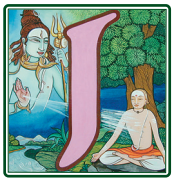


Master of the Word

Bṛihaspatiḥ

बृहस्पतिः

From *Tattvāloka,* February-March, 1990



N THE PRIMORDIAL THROB, *ADYA SPANDA*, THE *TANTRA* SAYS, INHERES A series of vibrations that take the form of sound, *nāda.* This is the word, the Word Eternal, Nityavak of the *Veda,* which itself became all the worlds. *Vāk* descends for the purpose of creation, with Her four cosmic steps. The *Veda* says that all speech is measured out in four steps or planes, impelled by the mind, and these are known to the knowers of Brahman. The first three are cryptic, hidden in secrecy, while the fourth step is human speech, that is, the ordinary word.

These four steps, or aspects, are: *sthūla,* the physical substance of matter; *sūkshma,* the vital life force supporting and circumferencing it; *kāraṇa,* the causal, the mind principle; and *mahākāraṇa,* the great causal, the high Supernal, where abides the Word with all the original rhythm. And these again correspond to the four states of consciousness: *jāgrat,* the waking state; *svapna,* the dream state; *sushupti,* deep sleep; and *turīya,* the fourth condition, that which is beyond these three.

The *tantrikas,* while admitting the principle of the division, apply it for practical purposes, dealing with the subject from a psycho-physical and psycho-spiritual point of view. Naturally, therefore, since the subtle centers play a vital part in their yoga, they locate the *vāk* of the states in the nervous system. They name it *para, pasyānti, madhyama* and *vaikharī.* The first and the supreme force—the primordial *paravāk*—is beyond the ordinary reality. It is unmanifest but turned towards manifestation. It is the great causal *mahākāraṇa,* and as such its center is at the base of the spinal column that supports the nervous system. This bottom is *mūlādhāra,* the root center of the physical being. Next is *pasyāntivāk,* the word that perceives; and this is the causal, located in the navel center. Then is *madhyamavāk,* the middle, the word in the intermediate, subtle region between the navel and the throat, which is the region for the expression of speech, called *vaikharīvāk.* Gaṇapati as Brahmaṇaspati is the Master of the Word, the Lord of Satya Mantra. And so, the *Tantra* conceives Him as having His abode in the *mūlādhāra* of beings, from where speech originates in the form of *paravāk.*

Seat of *Mūlādhāra*

It is said in the *Veda* that Brahmaṇaspati descends deep down into the inconscient waters to bring about in creation something stable and solid. In the macrocosm, His whole process of creation starts from the bottom. His action applies equally to the microcosm. In the microcosm, in the human being, there are different planes and parts of being which are governed by conscious centers and sources of the dynamic powers of the being, which again act as focal points for the consciousness to operate. These centers, picturesquely described as chakras (wheels of power), or *padmas* (lotuses) ready to unfold, are situated in the subtle body and are arranged one above the other in an ascending series from the lowest physical to the highest mind center and spiritual center. The lowest physical is represented by the bottom-most center, *mūlādhāra,* and Gaṇapati operates from there as the unmanifest word.

There is an ancient Tamil classic known as *Vināyaka Ahaval,* attributed to Auvaiyar, which is in praise of Gaṇapati. Fittingly, it starts with the words *sitak kalabhach sentamarippum padachilambu pala isai pada,* which means, superficially, "the various notes raised by the anklets adorning the lotus feet of the Lord, which are as cool as sandalpaste." The cool sandal *gandha* is the measure, *tanmatra,* of the earth element, *pṛithivī tattva,* and *sentāmarai* is the red lotus. Obviously, the *mūlādhāra* center is indicated, which is known as the *kulam,* where the earth element, the lowest physical, abides. Similarly, by *padachilambu* is indicated the quarter of speech, *paravāk.* At the outset of itself, the ancient Tamil classic praises Gaṇapati as the form of *paravāk,* having his abode in *mūlādhāra.*

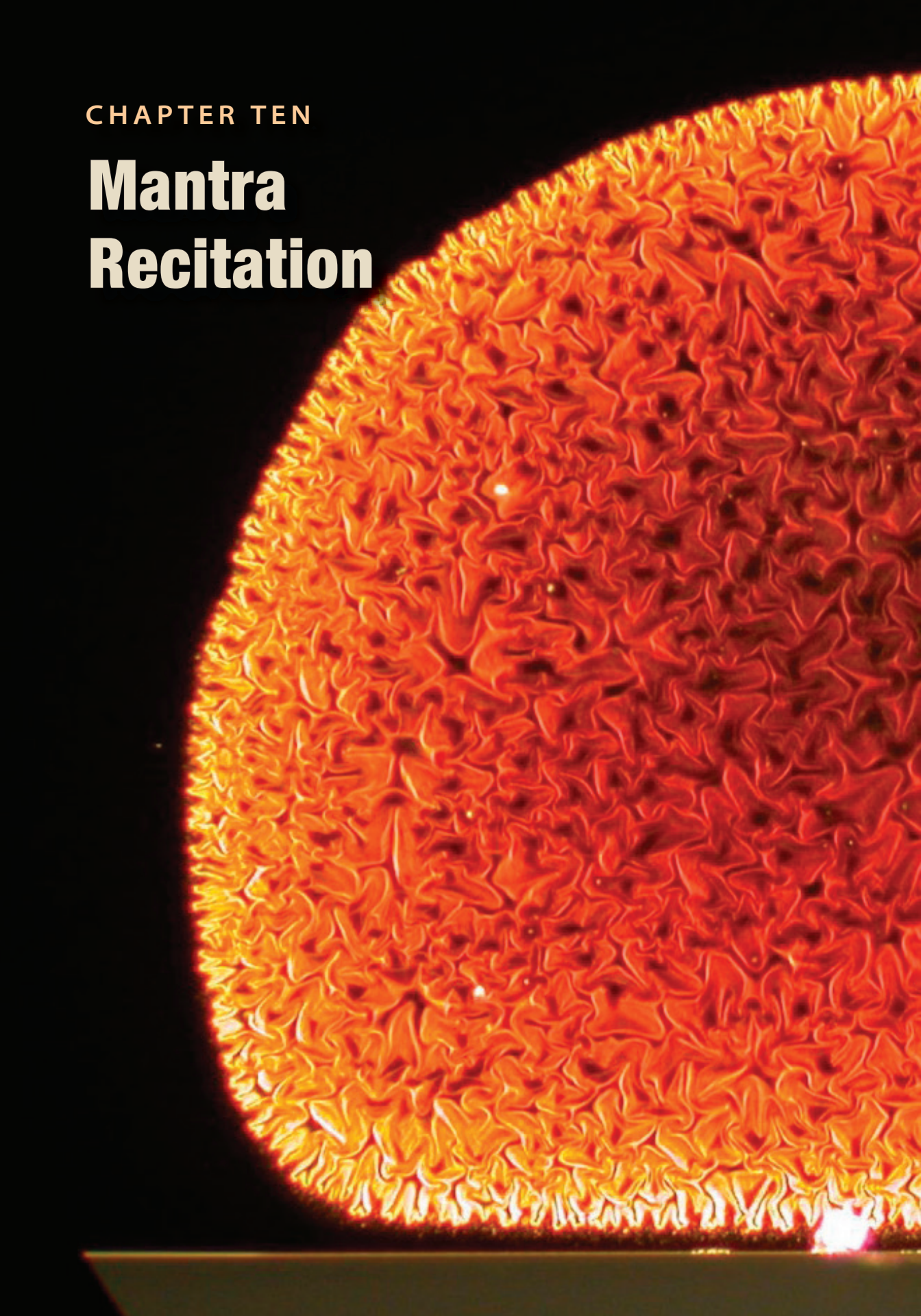
In the *mūlādhāra* is the potential energy picturesquely represented as the sleeping serpent power kuṇḍalinī śakti. There is a fire there, which in its gross form is *jaṭharāgni,* the physical fire, the fire that cooks all food, digests it and transforms it to sustain the physical organism. The other form is *vaiśvānara,* the soul in the heart of every being, the *jīva,* the Self, the Skanda of the *Purāṇas.* Still another form is the *vaidyuta,* electric energy, from which speech arises, thereby representing Gaṇapati. When Gaṇapati becomes active in the *mūlādhāra,* when His grace is felt, the kuṇḍalinī śakti wakes up, the fire shoots up its flames, opening the centre at the summit and filling the whole system with a downpour of nectar-like bliss. Then one is able to realize the Godhead in the mantra and know the sign of the Lord in the conscious mind—*Sattattil sadāśivam katti, sittattil Śivaliṅgam katti,* as the Tamil classic says.

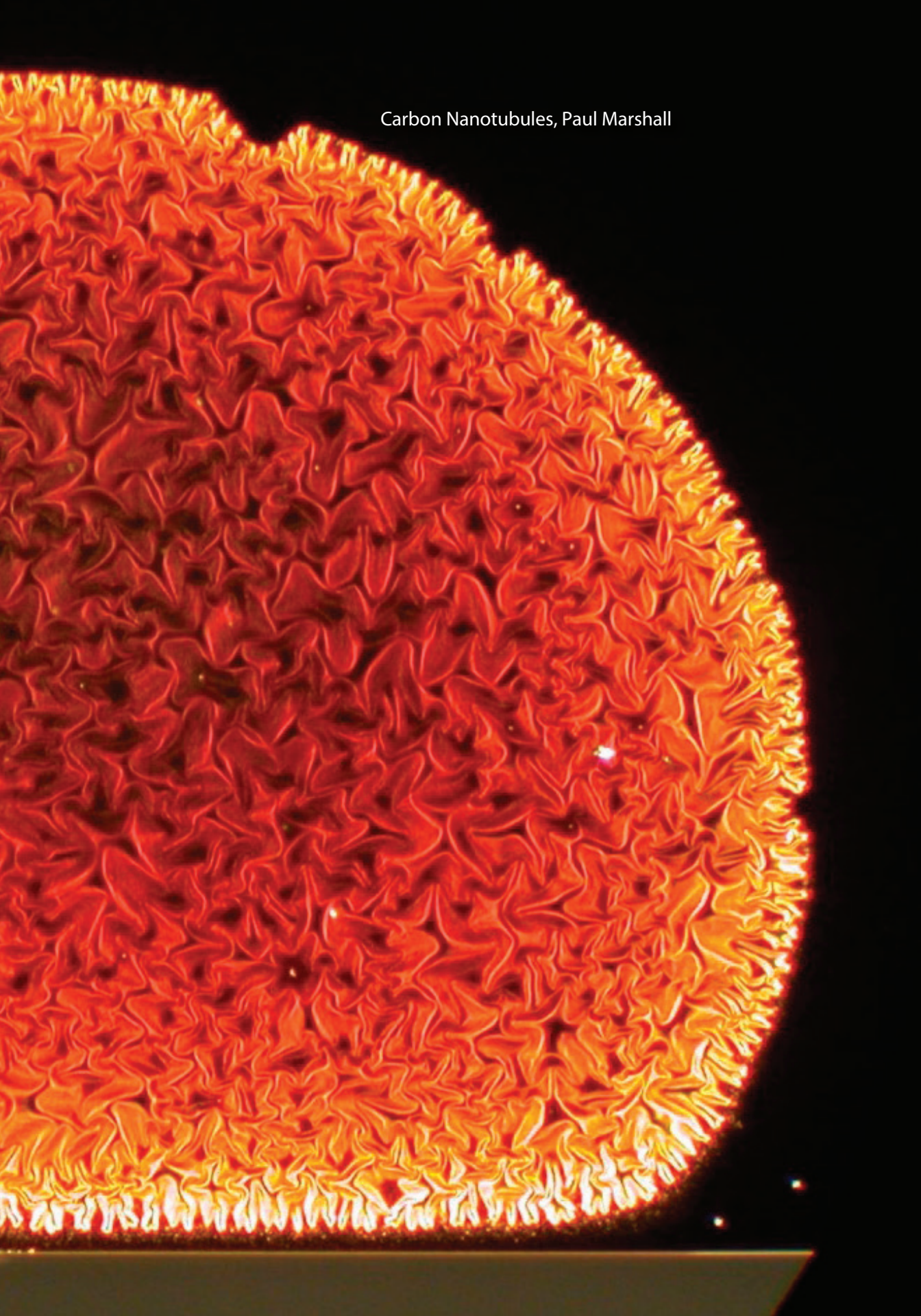
Powers and Personalities

Many are the powers and personalities of Gaṇapati. The universe is created in the form of groups *(gaṇas),* and for each *gaṇa* there is a Gaṇapati, collective head. Thus, there are innumerable Gaṇanāthas and Vināyakas. At least in the *Mahāśodha Nyāsa,* in the *Śākta Tantra,* there are as many Gaṇeśas as there are *mātṛikāksharas,* letters of the alphabet, that is, 51. Gaṇapati in the form of an infant, Bāla, indicates possibilities of growth and future unfoldment for the aspirant. Gaṇapati as a dancer points to dynamic, harmonious activity geared towards progress.

CHAPTER TEN

Mantra Recitation





Carbon Nanotubules, Paul Marshall

Mantra Recitation

Japaḥ

जपः

JAPA, OR RECITATION, IS THE SPIRITUAL PRACTICE OF DEVOTEDLY REPEATing a mantra, generally a specified number of times, such as 108, often while counting on a strand of beads, called a japa *mālā,* while conscientiously concentrating on the meaning of the mantra. The repetition should be dutifully slow. This brings *puṇya,* merit, to the devotee. It should not be thoughtlessly mechanical or the hurried, so-called rapid-fire or machine-gun japa, which demonstrate ignorance of the tantras. Such casual, nonchalant negligence and disregard for contemplative traditions brings *pāpa,* demerit, to the devotee, creating internal strife, community opposition and turmoil for all concerned.

Japa is a form of devotional worship, invocation, supplication, praise, adoration, meditation and direct, experiential communion. Unless we are actually in a state of *samādhi* (total absorption), which is rare for most people, japa provides a means to disengage from our racing thoughts and our memories of the past—mostly the bad ones. The repetition of positive, uplifting, spiritual mantras over and over again lifts consciousness and causes the *mūlādhāra* chakra to spin clockwise. We feel uplifted. Life does not look so bad, and neither does the past. A sense of forgiveness comes and the future looms bright. The past is forgiven and forgotten.

The power of thought and mind is embodied in sound form, that is, in the Word. The ancient ṛishis made this knowledge of the Word into a science and turned their minds toward the inner worlds, invoking the beings therein and offering their thoughts to the Deities and devas through Vedic hymns, prayers and mantras. According to the *Vedas,* the holy scripture that forms the basis of Hinduism, out of the mind of the Deity came the Word, *vāk*. Its evolutes precede and give rise to the forms of the inner mind—the astral forms. These subtle forms in turn give rise to the outer, material forms that we see.

> By that Word of His, by that Self, He
> created all this, whatever there is.
>
> *Śukla Yajur Veda, Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*
> 10.6.5.5. *The Vedic Experience* p. 106

> This [in the beginning] was only the Lord of the universe. His Word was with Him. This Word was His second. He contemplated. He said, "I will deliver this Word so that she will produce and bring into being all this world."
>
> *Sāma Veda, Tāṇḍya Mahā Brāhmaṇa* 20.14.2. *Vedic Experience* p.107

> The Word is infinite, immense, beyond all this.… All the Gods, the celestial spirits, men and animals live in the Word. In the Word all the worlds find their support.
>
> *Kṛishṇa Yajur Veda, Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* 2.8.8.4. *The Vedic Experience* p.107

The Vedic view brings increasing confirmation that modern physics is on the right track. Quantum electromagnetic field theories tell us that, in fact, there is no such thing as matter. There are only force fields of time and space that are observable as varying intensities. Thus, a carbon atom is not a bit of matter; it is a time-space-energy force field of a particular intensity.

Nuclear physicists can change the energy force fields in a chamber and transform one element into another. If we knew the carbon mantra and could say it properly, we would cause the particular time-space-energy force field to act and some carbon would precipitate. Certain occult practitioners can actually do this with their minds and cause objects to appear. Such magic does show the correspondence that there is between mind, sound and form. This is the basic mystical reality behind mantras. What is important for us to realize is that each Mahādeva can be experienced, expressed, in a mantra form that corresponds to that Being. This phenomenon is akin to remembering someone by his name rather than his face. When we utter such a mantra, we call forth the Mahādeva or cause a particular inner truth to rise up in our minds. Then we feel His presence and enjoy.

Two Classes of Mantras

There are two basic kinds of mantras. One class is a powerful set that causes immediate, direct changes to occur in the force fields around us, whether we know the meanings of the sounds or not. These mantras should only be used after initiation and proper instruction, because if they are mispronounced they can do us serious harm. The mantra singers of the Navajo Native Americans used potent healing mantras that would last for days and days. Even in recent times, a Navajo singer wrongly chanted on the fifth day of a nine-day chant and

crippled himself physically. This is a documented occurrence. He had to resort to less powerful mantras after that.

The second kind of mantras are either weaker, or the strong vibrations they produce cannot be distorted by misuse or mispronunciation. With this class of mantras, it is the power of our mind concentrated upon the inner-plane being or concept that makes the mantra most beneficial. If we are not concentrated, still the energy of the mantra can evoke only one vibration or image. The majority of Vedic mantras, as well as all the names of the Gods and the Gāyatrīs, fall into this category. Most Vedic chants are simply short hymns and prayers. The Sanskrit language itself causes positive, uplifting force fields that penetrate immediately into the inner realms.

My *satguru,* Sage Yogaswami, placed tremendous emphasis on the performance of japa, repeating the name of the Lord with concentration and feeling. This great *jñānī* explained, "May we not forget that mantram is life, that mantram is action, that mantram is love and that japa, the repetition of mantram, bursts forth wisdom from within. Japa yoga is the first yoga to be performed toward the goal of jñāna. In the temple perform japa. Under the sacred tree perform japa. I performed japa all this life as a silent *sādhana.* It is automatic

now." Sage Yogaswami enjoined his Śaivite devotees to "Wear *rudrāksha* beads and repeat the Pañchākshara. Let your heart grow soft and melt. Chant the Letters Five, and in love you will discover His will. Chant so that impurities, anxieties and doubts are purged. All hail Namaḥ Śivāya!"

Repeating mantras slowly purifies the mind, like running fresh water continually into a container of discolored water. A fresh stream of water causes the mud at the bottom of a container to rise and flow out over the top edges, eventually to be completely replaced by crystal-clear water. Similarly, japa cleanses the mind of impurities as the pure vibrations of the mantras loosen and wash away the impure vibrations.

Aum Japa

Lord Gaṇeśa is invoked through the mantra Aum. The *Māṇḍūkya Upanishad* elucidates the inner meaning of Aum, which embodies the highest wisdom. Aum has three syllables. *A* represents the waking state. *U* represents the dreaming state. *M* represents the state of deep sleep. Aum in its entirety, plus the moment of silence which follows it, represents the *śānti,* the peace beyond understanding. Thus, Aum japa performed as an invocation to Lord Gaṇeśa, the Lord of Wisdom and Knowledge—while love is welling up from our hearts and tears are for no reason flowing simultaneously—calls forth the knowledge of the entirety of our existence in these four categories of consciousness. These are realms that God Gaṇeśa rules over as Lord of Categories, and this is the knowledge that He can grant devotees who perform Aum japa and meditation on the meaning of Aum.

For Aum japa to be effective, the mantra must be pronounced correctly. The first syllable is *A,* pronounced as the English word "awe," but prolonged: "aaa." The second syllable is *U,* as in "roof," pronounced "oo" but prolonged: "ooo." The third syllable is *M,* pronounced "mm" with the front teeth gently touching and the sound prolonged: "mmmm." Each repetition is sounded for about seven seconds, with two seconds on *A,* two seconds on *U* and three seconds on *M,* with a silence of about two seconds before the next repetition. The three syllables are run together: AAUUMM (silence), AAUUMM (silence), AAUUMM (silence). On the first syllable, *A,* we feel the solar plexus and chest vibrating. On the second syllable, *U,* the throat vibrates. The third syllable, *M,* vibrates the top of the head. Thus, proper chanting of Aum also is a high form of yoga, moving energy from the lower chakras of the body up to the highest chakra, or energy center—the *sahasrāra* chakra at the crown of the head.

Another traditional way to do this japa is to take a full breath and then chant the AUM three times as you exhale. The first repetition is audible, the second is more quiet and the third is barely audible, as you concentrate within. Then inhale slowly as you visualize the image of our loving Lord Gaṇeśa in your mind. Then repeat the AUM again three times as you exhale. The breathing should not be forced, but natural, slow, gentle and rhythmical. We can use a japa *mālā* with 108 beads and pass over one bead for each repetition, or do the japa for a prearranged period of time.

Two Famous Gaṇeśa Mantras

Two other Gaṇeśa mantras are commonly used. One is *Aum Śrī Gaṇeśāya Namaḥ,* meaning "Praise to Lord Gaṇeśa." This is the mantra of invocation, adoration and worship. It is repeated at the beginning of pūjās and it can be used for japa, to invoke Gaṇeśa's blessings for the auspicious beginning of a task, project, change of life, community undertaking or simply to offer Him our praise. Another special mantra is *Aum Gaṁ Gaṇapataye Namaḥ.* This is Lord Gaṇeśa's *mūla* ("root") mantra. It is also known as His *bīja mantra,* for it combines Gaṇeśa's *bīja* ("seed") sound, "gaṁ," with the phrase, "Praise be to Gaṇapati." This mantra is used for yoga *sādhana* in which we invoke Gaṇeśa and merge ourself with His supreme knowledge and peace. These two mantras are not harmful if mispronounced, as sometimes happens, though they should be sounded as properly as possible to be most effective. Most importantly, they must be chanted at the same time each day, and this means exactly the same time, for full *devonic* support.

When the *gaṇas* and devas of Lord Gaṇeśa are finally attracted to the home shrine, the room will feel filled with actinodic energy even if it is a closet or a small sacred alcove. The energy will come out of seeming nowhere into the room. This feeling indicates that Ganeśa's *gaṇas* are present, eager and willing to do whatever they can to maintain *śānti,* peace, within the home and bind the family together. Nothing bad, hurtful or harmful will ever be performed by them, even if fervently prayed for. Only good and goodness will be their actions. They do not condone revenge. They do not deny anything to anyone who is within dharma's calling. And they do work within the *prārabdha* karmas of each individual within the family. Theirs is a calculated job in doing what they have to do to maintain family togetherness, even at great distances.

These *gaṇas* are numbered in the trillions, and they are available in every home to serve the devout. Today in China, Japan and nearly every country of the world they work to improve family togetherness, for this is their mission,

given to them, detail by detail, by our loving Gaṇeśa. Because of them, family life goes smoothly, protection is immanent, immediate, and all members of the family enjoy the secure vibration of being bound in love, good feelings for one and all and support for each other by every other member. This intricate working of the *prāṇas* within the home is what the *gaṇas* of our Lord do tirelessly day after day, year after year, generation after generation. By doing so they earn their rewards within the heaven of heavens. After all, humans are tribal and don't do well on their own, unless they are mature, renunciate sannyāsins of austere orders who thrive on their own bliss. It is Gaṇeśa's *gaṇas* who keep the extended families together, perpetuating the wealth from generation to generation, on into the future of futures. Invoke Lord Gaṇeśa through the proper *sādhanas* the same time each day, and He will send his *gaṇas* to reward you. Feed them milk and honey and all things sweet, placed upon your altar. This will be pleasing and considered a reward for good works well performed for you, your family and other loved ones.

Three Gaṇeśa Gāyatrī Mantras

Gāyatrī refers to a special three-line *Vedic* meter used in mantras for invoking and focusing consciousness on the Deity. The three *gāyatrīs* below are intoned during pūjās and *yajñas*. They may also be recited as powerful japa—repeated again and again, while gently regulating the breath according to systematic rhythms given by one's guru to establish a deep inner connection with Lord Gaṇeśa.

ॐ एकदन्ताय विद्महे
वक्रतुण्डाय धीमहि।
तन्नो दन्तिः प्रचोदयात्

Oṁ ekadantāya vidmahe
vakratuṇḍāya dhīmahi
tanno dantiḥ pracodayāt

We devote our thought to the one-tusked Lord. We meditate upon Him who has a curved trunk. May the tusked One guide us on the right path.

Gaṇapati Upanishad

ॐ तत्पुरुषाय विद्महे
वक्रतुण्डाय धीमहि ।
तन्नो दन्तिः प्रचोदयात्

Oṁ tatpurushāya vidmahe
vakratuṇḍāya dhīmahi
tanno dantiḥ pracodayāt

We devote our thought to that supreme person.
We meditate upon Him who has a curved trunk. May
the tusked One guide us on the right path.

Nārāyaṇa Upanishad

ॐ तत्कराटाय विद्महे
हस्तिमुखाय धीमहि ।
तन्नो दन्तिः प्रचोदयात्

Oṁ tatkarāṭāya vidmahe
hastimukhāya dhīmahi
tanno dantiḥ pracodayāt

We devote our thoughts to the mysterious Lord.
We meditate on His elephant face.
May the tusked One guide us on the right path.

Maitrāyaṇi Saṁhitā 2.6-9

A Special Collection of Gaṇeśa Mantras

From Sadguru Sant Keshavadas' Book *Lord Gaṇeśa*

Gaṇeśa mantras are siddhi mantras. Each mantra contains certain specific powers of Lord Gaṇeśa. When chanted with the proper *prāṇāyāma* (rhythmic breathing) and sincere devotion, they will yield good results. In general, Gaṇeśa mantras will ward off all evil and bless the devotee with abundance, prudence and success. Evil spirits dare not enter the home or the mind of the devotee where Gaṇeśa mantras are recited. Those so mystically inclined and knowledgeable of the seven chakras below the *mūlādhāra* use these powerful incantantions under the direction of the guru to close off these regions of the mind one by one and free consciousness from deep depression, confusion, jealousy, rage, lingering anger and fear. Some such mantras are

given below for the spiritual benefit of the readers.

One more point to remember is that one should bathe or wash the limbs before sitting for repetition of the mantra. Also, one should do three or more *prāṇāyāma* before beginning the mantra. The minimum repetition of the mantra should be one full *mālā,* or 108 times. When this is done at a fixed hour and place regularly for forty-eight days, it becomes an *upāsanā,* which means intense meditation, that will yield siddhis, or spiritual powers. Another warning to bear in mind is that one should use those powers only for healing the sick and other such selfless actions for the benefit of mankind. These powers should not be misused. Misuse of power may bring the curse of the *asuras.*

ॐ गं गणपतये नमः

Oṁ gaṁ gaṇapataye namaḥ

This is a mantra from *Gaṇapati Upanishad.* One may always use it before beginning a journey, a new course in school, new career or job, or before entering into any new contract or business so that impediments are removed and your endeavor may be crowned with success.

ॐ श्री गणेशाय नमः

Oṁ śrī gaṇeśāya namaḥ

This mantra is usually taught to children for their good education. It increases their memory power, and they become successful in their examinations. Of course, people of any age may use this mantra when taking courses in a school or university, and for success in attaining their degree.

ॐ श्री वक्रतुण्डाय हुं

Oṁ śrī vakratuṇḍāya huṁ

This is a very powerful mantra, as discussed in the *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa.* When something is not working properly, individually or universally, nationally or internationally, or when the minds of the people turn crooked, negative, depressed or discouraged, the attention of Gaṇeśa may be drawn by this mantra to straighten their ways. The HUM symbolizes "Delay no more, my Lord, in straightening the paths of the crooked-minded ones." This mantra is used many times in the *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa* to curb the atrocities of cruel demons. In addition, this mantra could also be used for healing any spinal deficiency, such as curvature of the spine or curved limbs. Dedicate 1,008 repetitions of this holy word to straighten and heal such deficiencies.

ॐ क्षिप्रप्रसादाय नमः
Oṁ kṣipraprasādāya namaḥ

Kshipra means instantaneous. If some danger or negative energy is coming your way and you don't know how to get rid of that trouble, with true devotion practice this mantra for quick blessing and purification of one's aura.

ॐ श्रीं ह्रीं क्लीं ग्लौं गं गणपतये
वर वरद सर्वजनम्मे वशमानय स्वाहा
Oṁ śrīṁ hrīṁ klīṁ glauṁ gaṁ gaṇapataye
vara varada sarvajanamme vaśamānaya svāhā

There are several *bīja* (seed) mantras in this mantra. Among other things, it signals, "Shower Your blessings, O Lord. I offer my ego as an oblation."

ॐ सुमुखाय नमः
Oṁ sumukhāya namaḥ

This mantra has a lot of meaning, but to make it simple, it means you will be always very beautiful in soul, in spirit, in face, everything. By meditating on this mantra, very pleasing manners and a beauty comes on you. Along with that comes peace, which constantly dances in your eyes; and the words you speak are all filled with that power of love.

ॐ एकदन्ताय नमः
Oṁ ekadantāya namaḥ

Ekadanta refers to one tusk in the elephant face, which means God broke the duality and made you to have a one-pointed mind. Whoever has that oneness of mind and single-minded devotion will achieve everything.

ॐ कपिलाय नमः
Oṁ kapilāya namaḥ

Kapila (red) means that you are able to give color therapy. You are able to create colors around yourself and around others, bathe them in that color and heal them. As per the mantra you create, so will you create the colors. Another meaning is "wish cow," the "cow of plenty." It means that whatever you wish, that comes true. There is a wish-cow inside you. Whatever you wish, especially for healing others, comes true immediately.

ॐ गजकर्णिकाय नमः
Oṁ gajakarṇikāya namaḥ

The ears of Gaṇeśa, the elephant, are constant fanning, which means people may talk a lot, but you are not receiving inside anything other than that which is important. It also means that you can sit anywhere and tune this cosmic television (the body) with seven channels (chakras) and all 72,000 *nāḍīs,* to any *loka* and be able to hear ancestors, angels, the voice of God or the voice of prophets. That kind of inner ear you will develop through this mantra.

ॐ लम्बोदराय नमः
Oṁ lambodarāya namaḥ

This means you feel that you are this universe. It means that all the universes are within you. Like an entire tree is in the seed, the whole universe is in the sound of creation, which is Aum, and that Aum consciousness in you makes you feel that you are the universe. Therefore, if you say, realizing the oneness with the universe, "*śānti* to the world" every day, then the grace of God will come and there will be world peace, universal peace. It is the universes within Aum and Aum within you.

ॐ विकटाय नमः
Oṁ vikaṭāya namaḥ

This means realizing this world as a dream or a drama. When you are in that high consciousness, this whole world looks like a dream. All of us have taken a role. We have to play our role in life as wife or husband or children or citizens, all consistent with the role we have taken. When an actor bitten by a sponge cobra that is brought on the stage falls, the entire audience cries; but that boy who has fallen knows it was not a real cobra and he is not dead. Life is a drama—definitely life in this material world, this physical world of ego, is a drama. But inside, like the boy on the stage who is quite happy knowing that he didn't die by the bite of the sponge cobra, like that, the truth never dies in us; it is immortal. So everything else you consider as drama. That consciousness comes to you by knowing this mantra.

ॐ विघ्ननाशनाय नमः
Oṁ vighnanāśanāya namaḥ

This mantra invokes the Lord Gaṇeśa to remove every impediment in your life and in your works. By constant meditation on this mantra, all obstacles and

blocked energy in your physical and astral bodies are released.

ॐ विनायकाय नमः

Oṁ vināyakāya namaḥ

Vināyaka is the name of Gaṇeśa in the golden age. So, by realizing this mantra your life will have a golden age. In your office, in your work you'll be the boss. Vināyaka means something under control. Vināyaka means the Lord of problems.

ॐ धुम्रकेतवे नमः

Oṁ dhumraketave namaḥ

Halley's Comet is called Dhumraketu in the *Vedas.* Whenever Halley's Comet appears, on the whole planet Earth, and in other places also, there will be fear and terror. The guiding masters and those who have the wisdom to face it will all withdraw to the higher worlds. Important people die during that time, and bloodshed and various other problems come. To overcome that, it's important for us to remember this mantra for world peace.

ॐ गणाध्यक्षाय नमः

Oṁ gaṇādhyakṣāya namaḥ

This mantra is so important. Suppose you have a group, a country, neighbors, or any kind of group therapy, group healing or a whole country needing healing, then you have to bring that entire group to your mind's arena and say this mantra. A group healing takes place by this mantra.

ॐ भालचन्द्राय नमः

Oṁ bhālacandrāya namaḥ

In Sanskṛit, *bhāla* means the forehead center. *Chandra* means the crescent moon. *Bhālachandra* means that chakra from where the nectar drips. That is the secret of all healing. It is to feel yourself as Śiva, identifying yourself with the Truth and feeling constantly that you are carrying the crescent moon, the symbol of growth and nectar and peace.

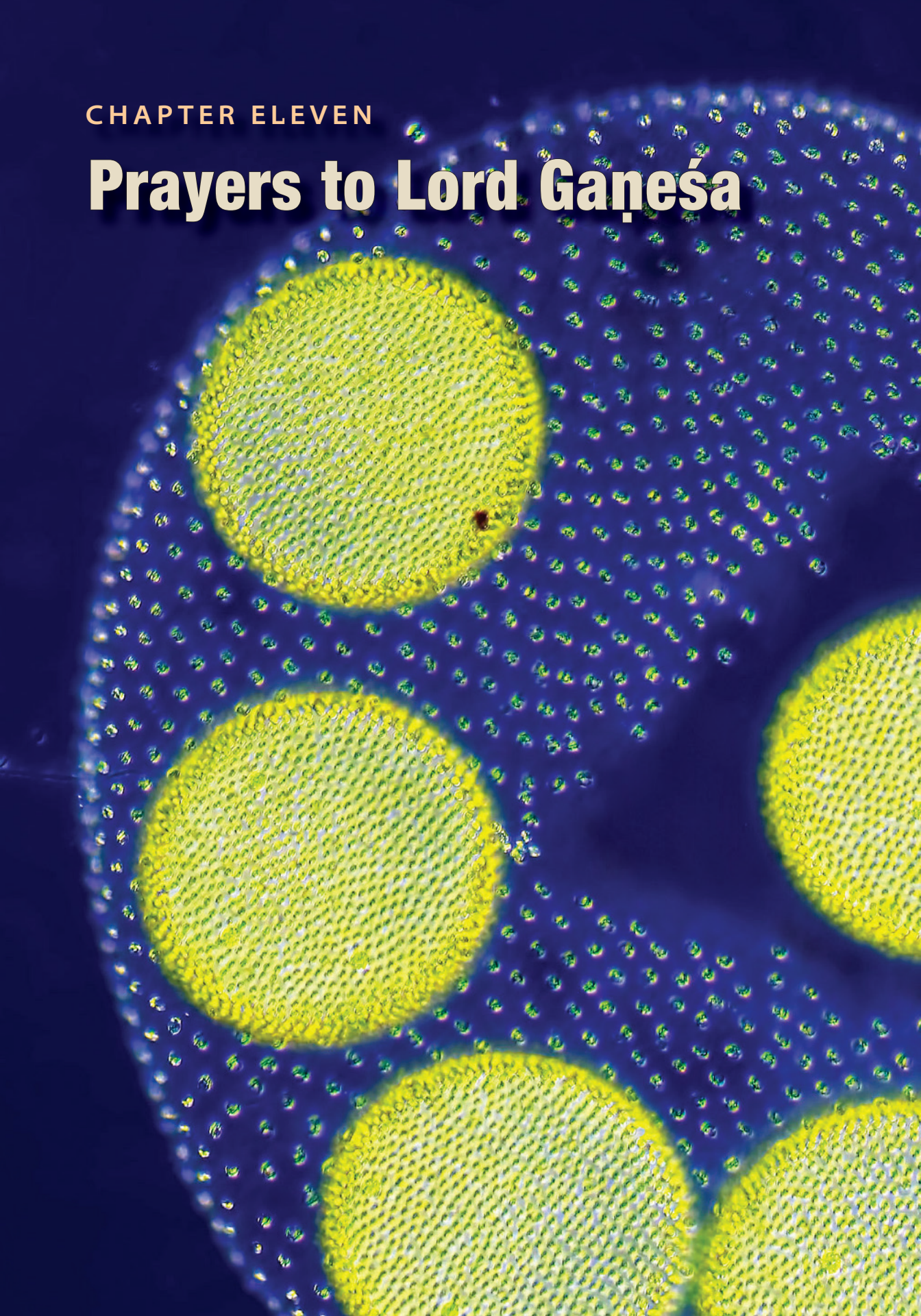
ॐ गजाननाय नमः

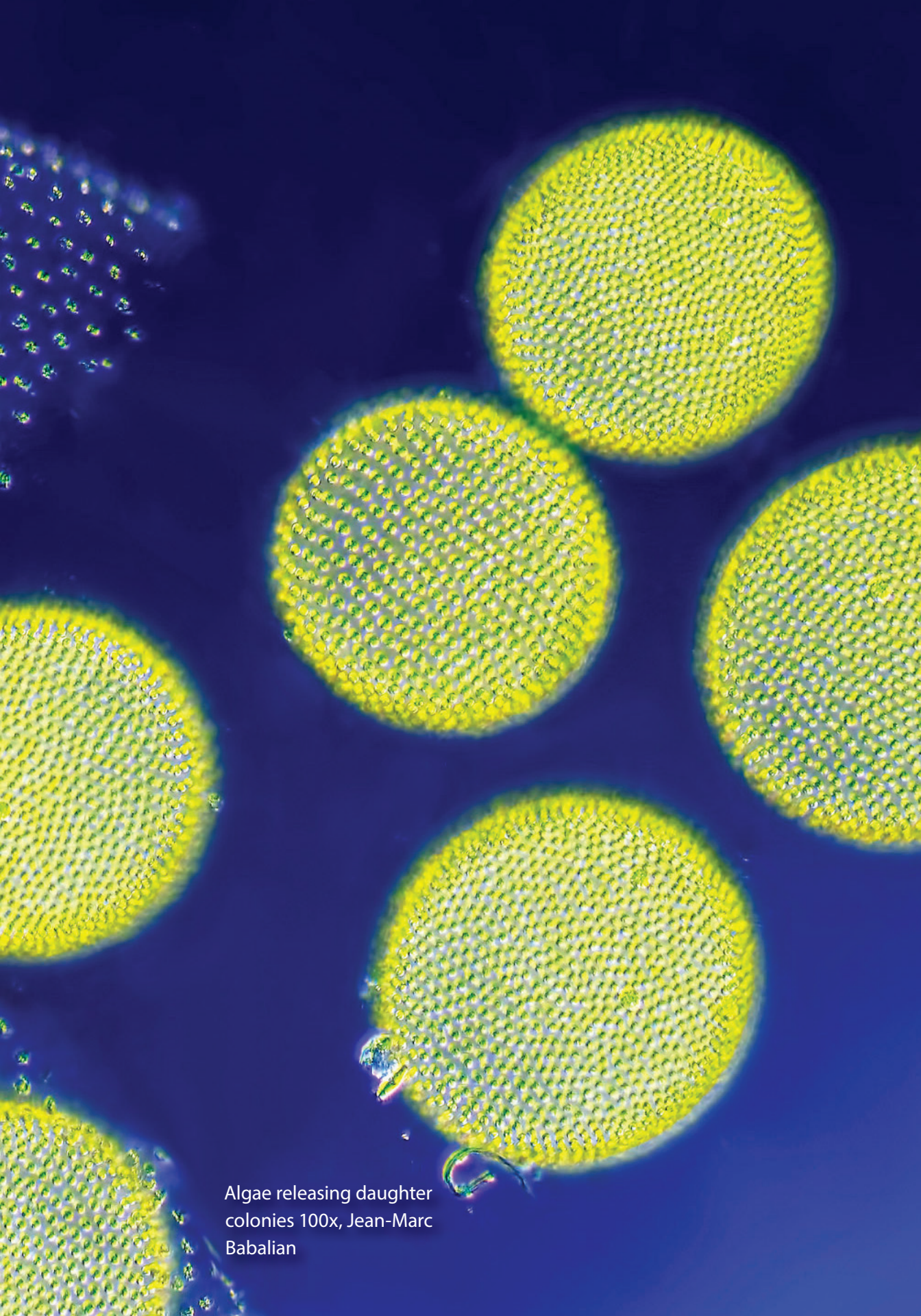
Oṁ gajānanāya namaḥ

This means to have up on your trunk an elephant head. [Literally: I bow to He with an elephant's face.] It means the ego is cut off and in its place Oṁ is kept. This means to have a head filled with infinite consciousness.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Prayers to Lord Gaṇeśa





Algae releasing daughter colonies 100x, Jean-Marc Babalian

Prayers to Lord Gaṇeśa

Gaṇapati Prārthanāḥ

गणपतिप्रार्थनाः

KNEELING OR STANDING, SITTING IN PADMĀSANA OR WALKING ALONE, devotees discover in prayer one of the most powerful forms of communication with inner worlds. Through praying with concentrated feeling, or *bhāva,* we can share our inmost sensibilities with Lord Gaṇapati. Thus we establish a connection with the Deity. One of the finest explanations of prayer from the Hindu perspective was given by the renowned Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh, Uttar Pradesh, India.

"The entire process of spiritual ascent is from start to finish one of earnest practice. There is no other road except *abhyāsa* (dedicated striving and practice). One may have the best feeling, the best heart, the most sublime *bhāva,* but unless and until every part of this is put into actual practice, there is no hope. *Abhyāsa* is the keynote of the life of *sādhana.* Without it, *sādhana* will not go towards its fruition of *anubhūti,* or experience. Thus we have the celestials standing at the door of Mahādeva. They hymn Him, glorify Him and pray unto Him; and this is our next cue. It is the law of prayer that is now given to us as our sole guide upon the path.

Prayer means, first and foremost, a perfect belief in a higher power. It means the desire and willingness to submit our *abhimāna,* or ego, at the feet of a higher power. Thus, the acquisition of *śraddhā* (faith) is now pointed out to us. The submission of our personal ego is next pointed out to us. Herein its natural corollary, the cultivation of the supreme virtue of absolute humility also is indicated. The devas prayed not that they may get power to win over the *asuras.* There is the attitude of willing self-abnegation, self-effacement, a standing aside so that the fullest manifestation of the divine power may stand in front and take over the stand from them. This indicates the recognition of the nondoership of the individual self and the Supreme doership of the one Doer, the Supreme God. It indicates that the *sādhaka,* or the seeker, is but a mere instrument; and it is the Lord Himself, the Indweller in the individual, who takes over the *sādhana* and actually does it. When the seeker begins to feel that even this *sādhana* is not done by him, but that it is the Divine śākti that works within him and enables the *sādhana* to be worked out and which achieves the ultimate fulfillment of the Divine Will, then he starts on the real upward march and rapid ascent toward triumphant divinity.

"Thus the second aspect of prayer unfolds itself before us. We completely allow the Divine to take charge of our personality. The seeker recedes into the background and there is total resignation to the will of the Divine. 'I am nothing; Thy will be done.' This is the formula that keeps tune to every beat of his heart, every pulsation in his body. The seeker becomes a transformed being." (From *Lord Shanmukha and His Worship,* p. xiii-xv)

Using Various Kinds of Prayers

When we go to the temple in distress or when we go in great joy and thankfulness, our prayers may flow spontaneously up from our hearts. Some find it very natural to speak out in words, bringing their gratitude, adoration or troubles into a form that can be offered to Lord Gaṇeśa. Others may just stand, feeling but not knowing what to say in their own minds or hearts. Others may not yet feel at all close to the Mahādeva but still yearn to open the door to religious communion with the Deity. In other words, many people want to learn how to pray.

We are indeed fortunate if we have been raised to learn the ancient Hindu hymns or the songs and prayers of the *sants*. These can be spoken in their original Indian languages, or voiced in the translation to other tongues. There are many types of prayer. There are prayers of invocation performed prior to worship or important actions. There are prayers of entreaty, requesting devonic aid in times of decision, trouble or turmoil. There are prayers of praise, giving thanks for God's grace and the fulfillment of our needs. And, perhaps most importantly, there are prayers specially written for the children, messages that make them aware of their innate intimacy with the Divine. On the following pages we offer a wide variety of prayers to Lord Gaṇeśa composed in recent times in the English language, along with several famous invocations from the Sanskrit tradition.

By memorizing prayers, we make them immediately available to put into use wherever we are. In the temple with God Gaṇeśa before us or by ourselves with the Lord in our mind, we can repeat them with a strong, concentrated feeling which will carry our thoughts into the inner world of the Gods. As our worship matures into an open relationship with the Deity, these prayers will come automatically to mind as our way of talking with the Lord. They are especially useful during and after Gaṇeśa pūjā, when the Lord is present and listening and we are in close touch with Him. Of course, prayer can be used at any time to make us aware of our being in the mind of Lord Gaṇeśa. As we come to know God Gaṇeśa better, our communication with Him will take on more the spirit

of talking with one's intimates, parents or close friends, and our own spontaneous words may mix freely with formal prayers.

Prayers of Invocation

Invocations are chants and prayers by which we invoke the presence of the Deity. The God is being called. The God and the devotee are being brought together, in touch. Prayers of invocation often sing out the greatness of the Deity, His known attributes and qualities. Vedic ṛishis and holy sages of olden times were masters of invocation. They could immediately call up the *devatā* through the strength of their mantras. In the pūjā and japa chapters of this book there are many chants that also serve as powerful invocations. "Aum Śrī Gaṇeśāya Namaḥ" is an invocation in itself. We begin this section on prayers with a famous *śloka* to Lord Gaṇeśa from the root scripture of all denominations of Sanātana Dharma, the *Vedas*. It has been chanted by billions of Hindus down through the ages, uttering five attributes of Gaṇeśa and invoking His all-powerful protection.

Oṁ śuklāmbaradharaṁ viṣṇum
Śaśivarṇaṁ caturbhujam
Prasanna-vadanaṁ dhyāyet
Sarvavighnopaśāntaye

Aum, attired in white and all-pervading,
O moon-hued, four-shouldered One
with smiling face so pleasing,
upon You we meditate
for removing all obstacles.

Śrī Adi Sankara prayed in his *Gaṇeśa Bhujaṅgam* the following invocation. It is particularly suitable for recitation before japa and deep meditation on the highest wisdom of Lord Gaṇeśa, the incomparable Lord:

To You whom the wise exclaim
as the single-syllabled, Supreme sound,
stainless and peerless,
bliss, formless, unconditioned—
the Indweller in the core of
sacred tradition—to that
Primeval One I bow in adoration.

Prayers of Supplication

Prayers of supplication are requests, pleadings or entreaties presented to the Deity in the spirit of personal surrender and loving devotion. Something specific is being asked for, a specific problem is being laid at the Lord's holy feet. Such supplications to the one-tusked Lord are given unconditionally, with full trust that He will do what is best for us, though not necessarily what we might think is best. We do not demand of the Lord; for He, like a parent, provides not as we desire, but as we truly need. Prayers of supplication may come forth in the natural language of our hearts.

Leaving a problem at His holy feet means we let it be there and do not carry it home with us. Nor do we worry or wonder about how it will be handled, when it will be taken care of, or if it will be taken care of at all. In full, unquenchable faith we leave the matter there, at the feet of the God, and walk away from the temple or shrine feeling that release has started and solution will be forthcoming. We must have this kind of faith for religion to work within us. To carry home with us the same problems, fears and worries would be to take back the offering we have given the Deity to dissolve. This is like the rich and famous who buy with gifts and do not give at all, slyly expecting more than something in exchange, gaining *pāpa* rather than *puṇya* and not knowing the difference. The course of events will later show how He works for our ultimate spiritual welfare. The following are prayers we may use as circumstance dictates.

MOMENTS OF DECISION

Aum, Śrī Gaṇeśāya Namaḥ—Great Lord of Wisdom, here I stand with so many decisions to make, with so many ways to turn. I beg for your grace. Fill me with righteous judgment and clear discrimination as I lay all confusion at your holy feet and immerse myself solely in you. Aum, Gaṇeśa *śaraṇam, śaraṇam* Gaṇeśa.

RELEASE FROM WORLDLINESS

Aum, Śrī Gaṇeśāya Namaḥ—Lord Vināyaka, you are the Destroyer of all sin. I need you; help me. How long I've spent thinking only of worldly pursuits, caring not for the children of the future. How often I forget your eternal presence. I beg for your noose to hold me close and your goad to spur me on. Give me faith in God, Gods and *satgurus.* Gaṇeśa śaraṇam, śaraṇam Gaṇeśa.

TIMES OF NEED

Aum, Śrī Gaṇeśāya Namaḥ—Gaṇapati, Lord of Gaṇas. I, too, am a deva under your command. I know I can never ever separate myself from the intricate mind of the supreme intelligence. O Lord who destroys the obstacles of His devotees, grant me protection, guidance and help in this hour of need. (Devotee states his need or trouble.) Aum, Gaṇeśa śaraṇam. Grant me your grace, śaraṇam Gaṇeśa.

FAMILY WELFARE

O Lord Gaṇeśa, holder of the noose and goad, sweets, fruits and sugarcane, please provide for the welfare of my family. Guide prosperity and abundance to our door. But while we wait and mostly see only our wants and needs, please help us feel within our home your goodness and Divinity, which no calamity can conceal. Gaṇeśa śaraṇam, śaraṇam Gaṇeśa.

FREEDOM FROM FEAR AND ANGER

Omnipresent Lambodara, pure and peaceful doer of all good. Take away my fear and anger. Let me see you everywhere and at all times. Show me the truth that there is no intrinsic evil. Remove all barriers in my mind to understanding, true trust and love. Guide me to a harmonious life and righteous success in the fulfillment of my dharma. Gaṇeśa śaraṇam, śaraṇam Gaṇeśa.

RELEASE FROM EGOITY

Aum, Śrī Gaṇeśāya Namaḥ! O keeper of the gate to the life of Sanātana Dharma, open that gate for me to feel your intricate mind moving all things toward the world of the Gods. Open the gate for me to live in continuous worship. Let me enter a new world where my ego is not my God. Open the gate; let me through to your blissful world of trust, love and harmony. Gaṇeśa śaraṇam, śaraṇam Gaṇeśa.

Praise, Adoration and Thankfulness

In prayers of praise, adoration and thankfulness we do not ask for anything, but simply offer our feelings of love and recognition to Lord Gaṇeśa when our heart is full of His grace. The more we worship and come to understand Him, the more we realize the greatness of His work in our life and see His presence all around us. It is from this perspective that the great bhaktas of the past sang

many of their songs to God. Such prayers confirm our relationship with Lord Gaṇeśa and draw us ever closer to His mind.

JOYOUS PRAISE

Aum, Śrī Gaṇeśāya Namaḥ! Thank you, Umagaṇeśa, for the wonderful fulfillment you have brought into my life. I show gratitude by giving abundant *dāna* to the temple where you received and answered my prayers. Your śakti is the blossoming origin of love. Praise to you who are the source of all sweetness. I take refuge in grateful surrender at your holy feet. Aum, jai Gaṇeśa!

OFFERING GIFTS

Aum, Śrī Gaṇeśāya Namaḥ! O my grand and gracious Lord Gaṇeśa. Here I am, with only you in my mind. My body's life is your warmth. Your fire is my comfort. Now, with pūjā flames we offer that fire back to you. These fruits and flowers are yours to enjoy. My very mind, too, is yours to direct. O peaceful One, praise to you. Take these offerings and take, too, a place in my humble life, in your heart. Gaṇeśa śaraṇam, śaraṇam Gaṇeśa.

APPRECIATION

Aum, Śrī Gaṇeśāya Namaḥ! Peerless One, industrious indweller in all, we see you in the full warmth of the Sun, in the full life of Earth and the orderliness of all the turning planets. O Lord and lover of intellect, you are the intricate knowledge blossoming in the mind of the people. O Lord who rules the mind of each and all who worship you, because of you, chaos never was nor will it ever be. Gaṇeśa śaraṇam, śaraṇam Gaṇeśa.

Here is a prayer that has been used for centuries wherever Gaṇapati is the principal Deity of the home.

TRADITIONAL SALUTATION

Praise be to elephant-faced Gaṇeśa, the Incomprehensible One with a sharp tusk, three eyes and capacious belly, King of all beings, the Eternal One of blood-red hue, whose forehead is illuminated by the new moon, Son of Śiva-Śakti, Remover of all difficulties. Gaṇeśa śaraṇam, śaraṇam Gaṇeśa.

Daily Prayers for Children

Teaching children prayers to recite at regular times during the day is a wonderful practice through which we fulfill our duty of passing our religion on to coming generations. Parents are encouraged to sit and say these prayers with the children until they enter the spirit of talking with Lord Gaṇeśa themselves.

MORNING PRAYER

Aum, Lord Gaṇeśa, you make the flowers grow, you keep the Earth going around the Sun. All day you keep things going right. You are Lord of the devas. I am one of your devas, too. Help me to think of the needs of others, and to be kind to everyone I meet. Help me to think of you first before beginning something new and to always do what is right and kind. Gaṇeśa śaraṇam, śaraṇam Gaṇeśa.

NOON PRAYER

Aum, Lord Gaṇeśa, you have kept my heart beating. You have guarded me from wrongdoing. Make my love for my family and friends grow stronger each day. Make me careful and wise. Help me to respect and heed the remindings of our *kulaguru,* to be respectful to my parents and remember above all the wisdom of the *Vedas.* Gaṇeśa, that is a lot for me to do. Please help me succeed. Gaṇeśa śaraṇam, śaraṇam Gaṇeśa.

BEDTIME PRAYER

Aum, Lord Gaṇeśa, nightime is here and the moon is in the sky above, reminding me of your crescent tusk. Remain with me, Gaṇeśa, through the night, in my deepest sleep, in my inner experiences, as you have remained with me during my daytime, outer encounters. Let me never forget you, even in my dreams. May we as a family be guided by your loving wisdom, even there. Gaṇeśa saraṇam, śaraṇam Gaṇeśa.

MEALTIME PRAYER

Aum, Lord Gaṇeśa, all is within you. God Śiva has given you dominion over the material universe. Let me remember to always share my food with others. May the *prasāda* you have given me today make all my *prāṇas* and subtle currents flow

in perfect harmony, making my body healthy and strong so that I may serve you well. Gaṇeśa śaraṇam, śaraṇam Gaṇeśa.

We close this section with a prayer to Lord Vighnarāja, Ruler of Obstacles, for guidance and inspiration. This is something we all need to persevere through life's offerings of its many challenges to the supreme goal of moksha.

FOR GUIDANCE AND INSPIRATION

O Lord and ruler of many *gaṇas,* O Peaceful One who loves pomp and ceremony, patron of the arts and perserver of the best of ancient cultures, the one worshiped by all sages, use your mighty trunk to hold us close to your majestic mind, our purest state. Respond to our entreaties for clarity and direction, for this we supplicate. Protect us from beguiling ways and sternly direct us in the ways of our forefathers' traditions, forging for us new patterns to bring forth the old in the world of today. Keep us resolute to live the Sanātana Dharma. We prostrate at your holy feet. Please grant us your grace. Gaṇeśa śaraṇam, śaraṇam Gaṇeśa.

Śrī Gaṇeśa Upanishad

Excerpts from *Gaṇapatyatharśīrsham,*
Translated from Sankṛit by Dr. Vasant Lad

Aum! Let us listen with our ears to that which is auspicious, adorable one. Let us perceive with our eyes what is holy and auspicious. With strong, stable body and limbs, may we seek the divine grace and accept the noble order of all our life.

I surrender to you, Lord Gaṇeśa. You are the speaker. You are the listener. You are the giver. You are the sustainer. I am your disciple. Protect me from the front and back. Protect me from the north and the south, from above and below. Protect me from all directions.

You are full of perfect knowledge of truth and awareness. You are full of bliss and pure consciousness. You are truth, consciousness and bliss. You are the absolute awareness. You are full of supreme wisdom and knowledge.

You are the earth, water, fire, air and the space. You are the root foundation of speech. You are beyond the three *guṇas: sattva, rajas* and *tamas.* You are beyond the physical, mental and causal bodies. You are beyond the three

aspects of time: past, present and future. You are eternally established in the *mūlādhāra* chakra. You have three śaktis: action, knowledge and will.

Salutation to the Gaṇapati whose seed mantra is *Aum Gaṁ*. We know Ekadanta, the One-tusked God, the unique God. We meditate upon Vakratuṇḍa, the curved-trunk God. May that unique elephant God illumine our consciousness and direct us along the right track.

One should meditate upon Lord Gaṇeśa having one tusk and four arms; holding the noose and goad with two of them; with the other two indicating *varada,* the giving of boons and blessings, and *abhaya* mudrā, the fear removing gesture; having a mouse as the emblem on his ensign; possessing a big, beautiful belly and large, lovely ears which look like winnowing baskets; having a red cloth and His whole body covered with red sandalwood paste. He should be worshiped with red flowers. He manifests Himself as the universe and is beyond *prakṛiti,* matter, and Purusha, the manifest God. One who worships Gaṇeśa in this way forever is the best of yogīs.

Prostrations to Vrātapati, the Lord of Plenty. Prostrations to Gaṇapati, the Lord of various groups of Gods. Prostrations to Pramathapati, the Lord of Śiva's hosts. Prostrations to Lambodara, the full-bellied God with a single tusk, destroyer of obstacles, the Son of Śiva, the Bestower of all Blessings.

He who chants this *Gaṇapati Upanishad* will verily get established in Brahman, the pure awareness. He will never encounter any obstacles. He will be happy everywhere. He will be free from the five great sins and lesser ones. By reciting this in the evening, the day's sins are destroyed.

By reciting this in the early morning, one becomes free from the sins committed at night in dreams. Reciting this morning and evening, one becomes totally free from all sins. He becomes totally free from all obstacles. He achieves the four divine ends of life: dharma, artha, kāma and moksha: virtue, wealth, pleasure and liberation. Aum Gaṇeśa śaraṇam, śaraṇam Gaṇeśa.

Mahā Gaṇeśa Pañcharatna Stotram

महागणेशपञ्चरत्नस्तोत्रम् ॥

The Five-Jeweled Hymn to the Great Ganesha by
Śrī Adi Sankara, with Translation by J. Sethuraman

मुदाकरात्तमोदकं सदा विमुक्तिसाधकं
कलाधरावतंसकं विलासिलोकरक्षकम् ।
अनायकैकनायकं विनाशितेभदैत्यकं
नताशुभाशुनाशकं नमामि तं विनायकम् ॥१॥

mudākarāttamodakaṁ sadā vimuktisādhakaṁ
kalādharāvataṁsakaṁ vilāsilokarakṣakam |
anāyakaikanāyakaṁ vināśitebhadaityakaṁ
natāśubhāśunāśakaṁ namāmi taṁ vināyakam ||1||

नमामि तं विनायकम् I bow to the Remover of Obstacles,
मुदा करात्तमोदकम् who, with glee, holds a half-eaten *modaka* in His hand,
सदाविमुक्तिसाधकम् who is the ever-present means of liberation,
कलाधरावतंसकम् who has the moon as an ornament,
विलासिलोकरक्षकम् who protects all the world with His manifestions,
अनायकैकनायकम् who is the single leader for those who are leaderless,
विनाशितेभदैत्यकम् who destroyed the elephant demon and
नताशुभाशुनाशकम् who swiftly removes the blemishes of those who bow to Him.

नतेतरातिभीकरं नवोदितार्कभास्वरं
नमत्सुरारिनिर्जरं नताधिकापदुद्धरम् ।
सुरेश्वरं निधीश्वरं गजेश्वरं गणेश्वरं
महेश्वरं तमाश्रये परात्परं निरन्तरम् ॥२॥

natetarātibhīkaraṁ navoditārkabhāsvaraṁ
namatsurārinirjaraṁ natādhikāpaduddharam |
sureśvaraṁ nidhīśvaraṁ gajeśvaraṁ gaṇeśvaraṁ
maheśvaraṁ tamāśraye parātparaṁ nirantaram ||2||

महेश्वरं तमाश्रये I seek the refuge of the great Lord Gaṇeśa,
परात्परं who is higher than the highest,
निरन्तरम् who is everlasting,
नतेतरातिभीकरम् who causes fear in others than those that bow to Him,
नवेदितार्कभास्वरं who is resplendent as the newly rising sun,
नमत्सुरारिनिर्जरम् worshiped by both demons and Gods.
नताधिकापदुद्धरम् For those that bow to Him He is the savior from misery,
सुरेश्वरम् the lord of all the Gods, निधीश्वरम् the lord of all wealth,
गजेश्वरम् the elephant God, गणेश्वरम् Gaṇeśvara, the lord of the multitudes.

समस्तलोकशङ्करं निरस्तदैत्यकुञ्जरं
दरेतरोदरं वरं वरेभवक्त्रमक्षरम् ।
कृपाकरं क्षमाकरं मुदाकरं यशस्करं
मनस्करं नमस्कृतां नमस्करोमि भास्वरम् ॥३॥

samastalokaśaṅkaraṁ nirastadaityakuñjaraṁ
daretarodaraṁ varaṁ varebhavaktramakṣaram |
kṛpākaraṁ kṣamākaraṁ mudākaraṁ yaśaskaraṁ
manaskaraṁ namaskṛtāṁ namaskaromi bhāsvaram ||3||

नमस्करोमि भास्वरम् I bow to the resplendent one
समस्तलोकशङ्करम् who is beneficent to all the worlds,
निरस्तदैत्यकुञ्जरं who conquered the elephant demon,
दरेतरोदरम् whose belly is not small,
वरम् the excellent one
वरेभवक्त्रम् who has a beautiful elephant face,
अक्षरम् who is eternal, कृपाकरम् who is kind, क्षमाकरं who is forgiving,
मुदाकरम् who gives happiness, यशस्करम् who bestows fame,
मनस्करं who creates intelligence
नमस्कृतां in those who pay reverence to Him,
भास्वरम् the resplendent one.

अकिञ्चनार्तिमार्जनं चिरन्तनोक्तिभाजनं
पुरारिपूर्वनन्दनं सुरारिगर्वचर्वणम् ।

प्रपञ्चनाशभीषणं धनञ्जयादिभूषणं
कपोलदानवारणं भजे पुराणवारणम् ॥४॥

akiñcanārtimārjanaṁ cirantanoktibhājanaṁ
purāripūrvanandanaṁ surārigarvacarvaṇam |
prapañcanāśabhīṣaṇaṁ dhanañjayādibhūṣaṇaṁ
kapoladānavāraṇaṁ bhaje purāṇavāraṇam ||4||

भजे पुराणवारणम् I worship the ancient elephant God
अकिञ्चनार्तिमार्जम् who wipes out the misery of the poor,
चिरन्तनोक्तिभाजनम् the recipient of ancient words of praise,
पुरारिपूर्वनन्दनम् the first son of the enemy of the three cities (Śiva),
सुरारिगर्वचर्वणम् the shatterer of the pride of the demons,
प्रपञ्चनाशभीषणम् terrifying as the destroyer of worlds,
धनञ्जयादिभूषणम् decorated by fire and other elements,
कपोलदानवारणम् whose elephant cheeks are flowing with must (the rut that flows from the cheeks of male elephants.)

नितान्तकान्तदन्तकान्तिमन्तकान्तकात्मजं
अचिन्त्यरूपमन्तहीनमन्तरायकृन्तनम् ।
हृदन्तरे निरन्तरं वसन्तमेव योगिनां
तमेकदन्तमेव तं विचिन्तयामि सन्ततम् ॥५॥

nitāntakāntadantakāntimantakāntakātmajaṁ
acintyarūpamantahīnamantarāyakṛntanam |
hṛdantare nirantaraṁ vasantameva yogināṁ
tamekadantameva taṁ vicintayāmi santatam ||5||

तमेकदन्तमेव तं विचिन्तयामि सन्ततम् I constantly think of Him alone, the single-tusked one, नितान्तकान्तदन्तकान्तिम् who is beautiful, with His brilliant tusk, अन्तकान्तकात्मजम् the son of the destroyer of He who puts an end to death (Śiva), अचिन्त्यरूपम् with a form that cannot be comprehended, अन्तहीनम् with no end, अन्तरायकृन्तनम् who tears asunder all obstacles, and हृदन्तरे निरन्तरं वसन्तमेव योगिनां who in the inner chambers of the hearts of yogīs is like an uninterrupted spring season.

महागणेशपञ्चरत्नमादरेण योऽन्वहं
प्रजल्पति प्रभातके
हृदि स्मरन् गणेश्वरम् ।
अरोगतामदोषतां सुसाहितीं सुपुत्रतां
समाहितायुरष्टभूतिमभ्युपैति सोऽचिरात् ॥ ६॥

mahāgaṇeśapañcaratnamādareṇa yo'nvahaṁ
prajalpati prabhātake
hṛdi smaran gaṇeśvaram |
arogatāmadoṣatāṁ susāhitīṁ suputratāṁ
samāhitāyuraṣṭabhūtimabhyupaiti so'cirāt ||6||

योऽन्वहम् प्रजल्पति One who repeats every day
महागणेशपञ्चरत्नस्तोत्रम् the Mahā Gaṇeśa Pañcharatna Stotram
आदरेण with reverence, प्रभातके हृदि स्मरन् गणेश्वरम् in the mornings while recollecting Gaṇeśvara in his heart, सोऽचिरात् he, very quickly, will be joined by
अरोगतामदोषतां good health, freedom from deficiency,
ससाहितीं सुपुत्रतां समाहितायुरष्टभूतिम् good fellowship, good children, long life and the eight powers (*ashṭavibhūti, animā, mahimā, lagimā, garimā, etc.)*

महागणेशपञ्चरत्नस्तोत्रं संपूर्णम् ॥

mahāgaṇeśapañcaratnastotraṁ saṁpūrṇam ||

This completes the *Mahā Gaṇeśa Pañcharatna Stotram.*

Gaṇeśa Invocation

गणोशमन्त्रम्

An Invocation to Lord Gaṇapati
Ṛig Veda 2.23.1

ॐ गणानां त्वा गणपतिगं् हवामहे
कविं कवीनामुपमश्रवस्तमम् ।
ज्येष्ठराजं ब्रह्मणामं ब्रह्मणस्पत
आ नः शृण्वन्नूतिभिःसीदसादनम् ॥
ॐ महागणाधिपतये नमः ॥

Oṁ gaṇānāṁ tvā gaṇapatigṁ havāmahe
kaviṁ kavīnāmupamaśravastamam |
jyeṣṭharājaṁ brahmaṇāṁ brahmaṇaspata
ā naḥ śṛṇvannūtibhiḥsīdasādanam ||
Oṁ mahāgaṇādhipataye namaḥ ||

Of the multitudes, you are the Lord of Multitudes, we invoke you.
You are the wise sage of wise sages, the uppermost and highest glory.
The foremost king of prayers, you are the Lord of Prayers.
Come to us, listening with favors and help, sit and be present here.

Food-Blessing Chant

भोजनमन्त्रम्

A Prayer of Gratitude to the Source of Sustenance.
Lines 1–4 are from Shri Adi Sankara's *Annapūrṇāshṭakam*.
Lines 5–6 are the *Īśa Upanishad* invocation.
Lines 7–8 are a traditional Śaivite closing.

ॐ अन्नपूर्णे सदापूर्णे शङ्करप्राणवल्लभे ।
ज्ञानवैराग्यसिद्ध्यर्थं भिक्षां देहि च पार्वति ॥
माता च पार्वती देवी पिता देवो महेश्वरः ।
बान्धवाः शिवभक्ताश्च स्वदेशो भुवनत्रयम् ॥
ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते ।
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॐ शिवार्पणमस्तु ॥

Oṁ annapūrṇe sadāpūrṇe śaṅkaraprāṇavallabhe |
jñānavairāgya-siddhyarthaṁ bhikṣāṁ dehi ca pārvati. ||
mātā ca pārvatī devī pitā devo maheśvaraḥ |
bāndhavāḥ śivabhaktāśca svadeśo bhuvanatrayam ||
Oṁ pūrṇamadaḥ pūrṇamidaṁ pūrṇātpūrṇamudacyate |
pūrṇasya pūrṇamādāya pūrṇamevāvaśiṣyate ||
Oṁ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ || Oṁ śivārpaṇamastu ||

Aum, Mother (Annapurna) who is fullness of food and plenty, Fullness everlasting beloved Śakti of Siva; Mother of the universe, nourish us with this gift of food so that we may attain wisdom, dispassion and spiritual perfection. Goddess Pārvatī is my mother. God Maheśvara is my father. All devotees of Śiva are my family. All three worlds are my home. Aum, Śiva is Fullness. Creation is fullness. From Śiva's Fullness flows this world's fullness. This fullness issues from that Fullness, yet that Fullness remains full. Aum, peace, peace, peace. Aum, this I offer unto Śiva.

Shanti Mantra

A prayer for peace, clarity and blessing to begin and end meetings, based on the spirit of sangam, great rivers or great minds flowing together in selfless, superconscious wisdom.

ॐ स॒ह नाव॑वतु ।
स॒ह नौ॑ भुनक्तु ।
स॒ह वी॒र्यं॑ करवावहै ।
ते॒ज॒स्विना॒वधी॑तमस्तु ।
मा विद्वि॑षा॒वहै॑ ।
ॐ शान्ति॒ः शान्ति॒ः शान्ति॑ः ॥

Oṁ saha nāvavatu |
saha nau bhunaktu |
saha vīryaṁ karavāvahai |
tejasvināvadhītamastu |
mā vidviṣāvahai |
Oṁ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ ||

Aum, may we be protected.
May we rejoice.
May we work together with vigor.
May our studies illumine us.
May we have no contention or hostility
between us. Aum, peace, peace, peace.

A Mantra for Offering Incense

धूपमन्त्रम्

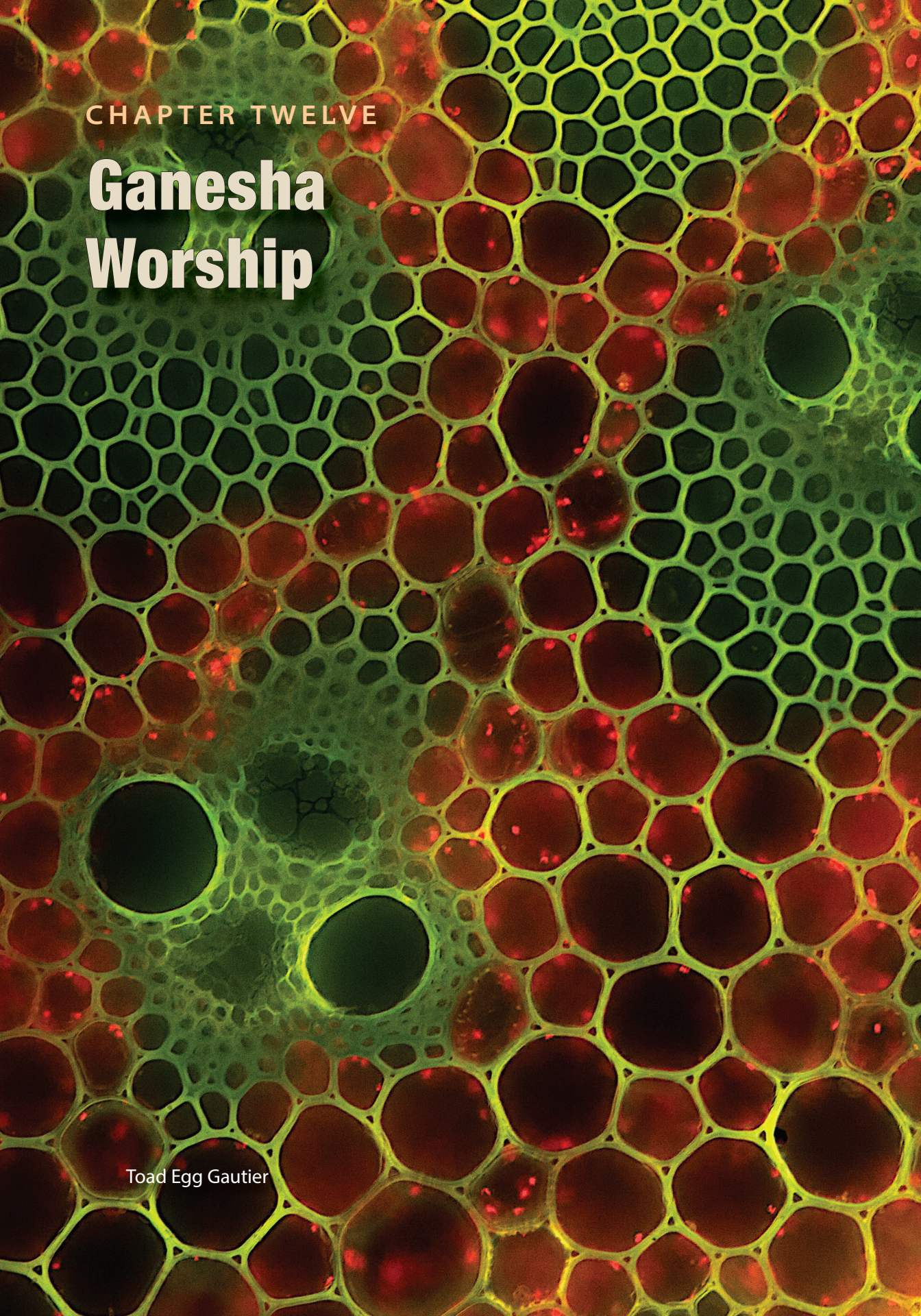
दशाङ्गं गुग्गुलोपेतं सुगन्धं सुमनोहरम्
आघ्रेयः सर्वदेवानां धूपोऽयं प्रतिगृह्यताम्

daśāṅgaṁ guggulopetaṁ sugandhaṁ sumanoharam
āghreyaḥ sarvadevānāṁ dhūpo'yam pratigṛhyatām

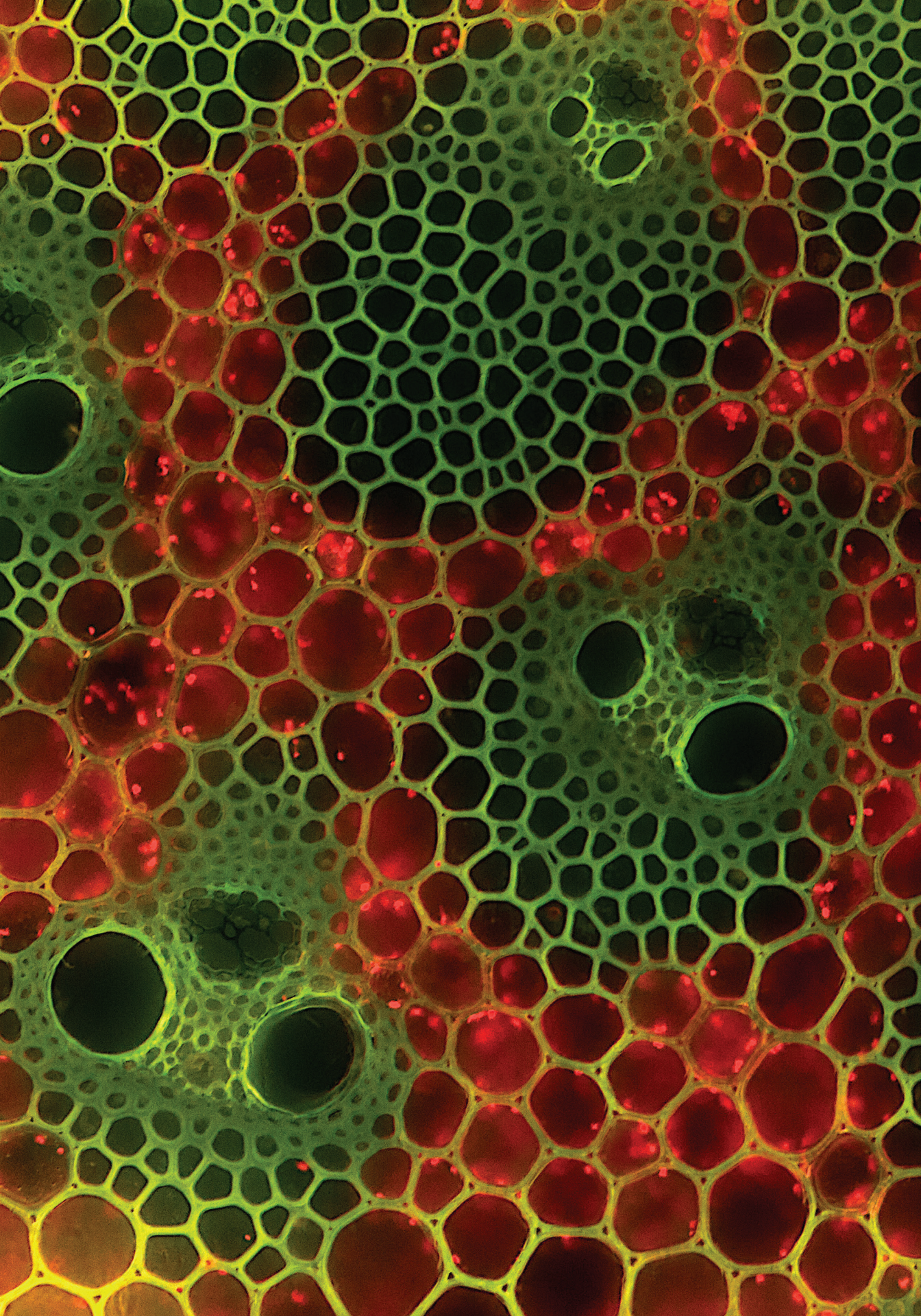
I offer to you this incense of the finest resins and perfumes, incomparable in sweetness and aroma, bewitching to the mind, which is to be inhaled and enjoyed by you and all the devas and Gods. Please accept it.

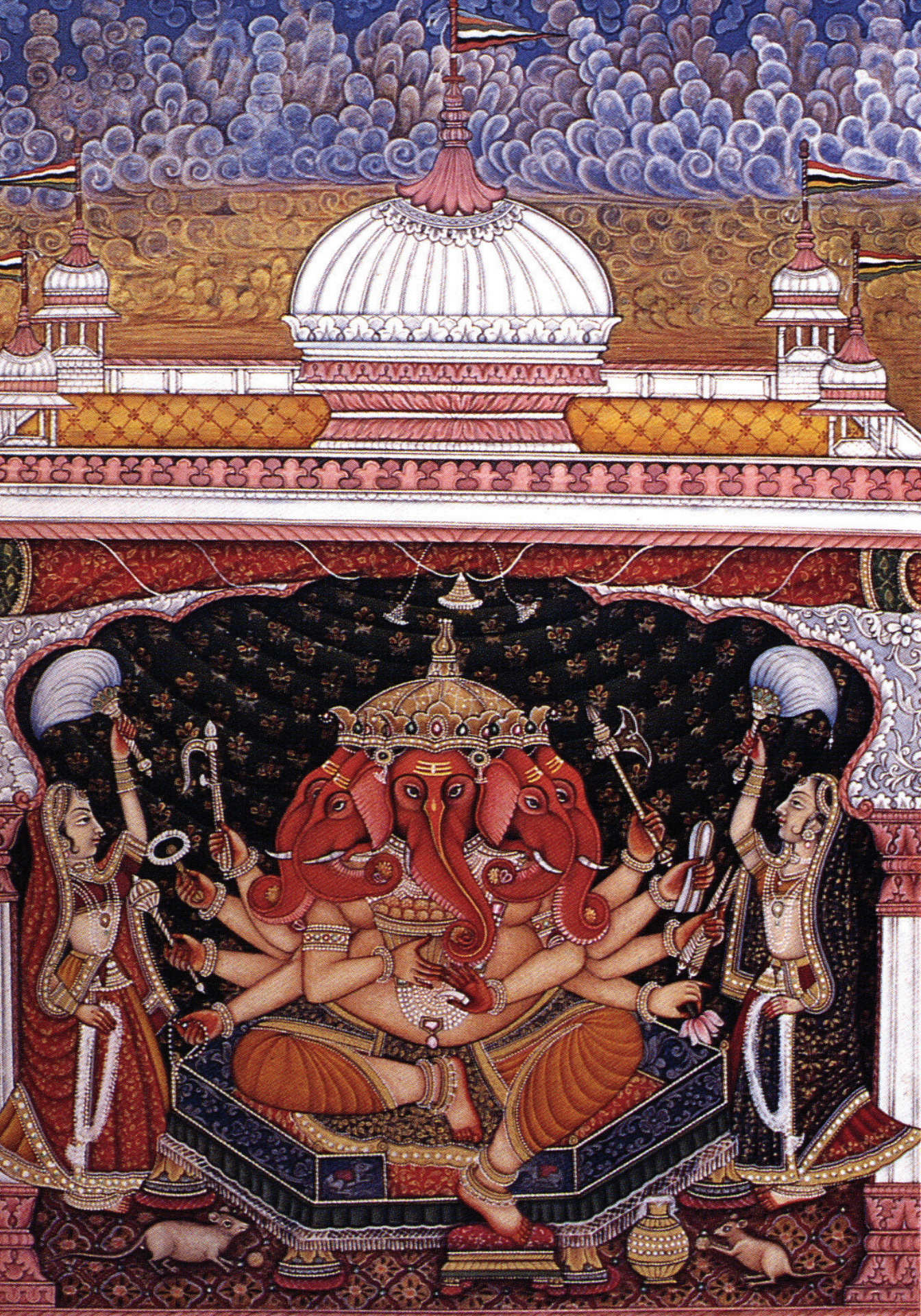
CHAPTER TWELVE

Ganesha Worship



Toad Egg Gautier





Gaṇeśa Worship

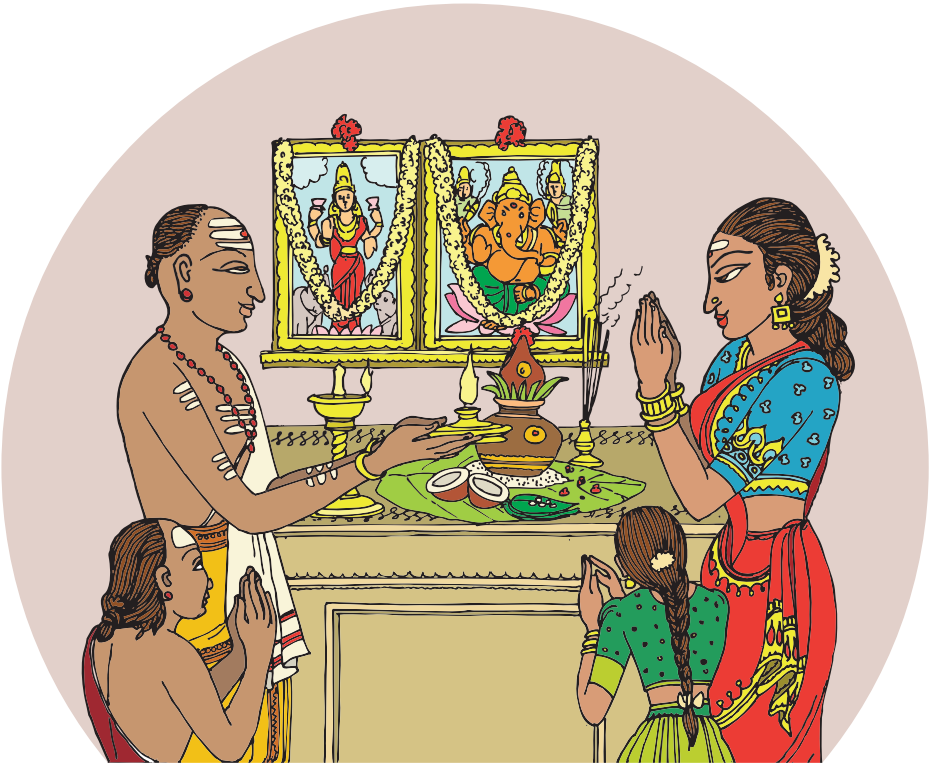
Gaṇeśopāsanā

गणेशोपासना

LOVE AND JOY COME TO HINDU FAMILIES WHO WORSHIP LORD GAṆEŚA IN their home through the traditional ceremony known as pūjā. By means of such sacred rites and the divine energies invoked, each family makes their house a sacred sanctuary, a refuge from the concerns and worries of the world. Pūjās can be as simple as lighting a lamp and offering a flower at the Lord's holy feet; or they can be elaborate and detailed, with many chants and offerings. The indispensable part of any pūjā is devotion. Without love in the heart, outer performance is of little value. But with true devotion, even simple gestures are sacred ritual. In this chapter we present a simple pūjā that anyone desirous of invoking our loving Gaṇeśa can perform. Sanskrit and English are given here, but the latter can easily be translated into your own native language. All family members should understand the meaning of the rites. Sanskrit should not become a barrier to performing Gaṇeśa pūjā. After all, He understands all dialects. One need not be initiated to perform this pūjā invoking our loving Gaṇeśa. All that is required is that the celebrant believe in the laws of karma and reincarnation, which are the cornerstones of Hindu ethical and philosophical doctrine. Gaṇeśa worship is enjoyed by all, Hindus and non-Hindus alike, as He is the first God to be worshiped. It is not wise for an *ardha*-Hindu, or half Hindu, to centralize worship on Śiva or Murugan or other Gods until full commitment has been made through receiving the traditional sacraments, called *saṁskāras.* Home pūjā is performed at least once a day, usually in the early morning. It is traditional to not partake of food at least three hours before pūjā, so pūjā is usually done prior to meals.

The Sanctity of the Home Shrine

All Hindus attend pūjā at their local temple at least once a week and maintain a sacred shrine at home, which esoterically functions as an extension of the temple. The shrine room is meticulously cared for and not used for purposes other than worship, prayer, scriptural study and meditation. Here, pūjā, home liturgy, is performed daily, generally by the head of the house. All members of the family attend.



Establishing a Home Shrine

Creating a home shrine is not difficult. The altar should be close to the floor, since most of the pūjā is performed while seated, though when there are small children in the home it is often higher, out of their reach. For a Gaṇeśa shrine, an image or *mūrti* of Lord Gaṇeśa is placed at the center of the altar. A metal or stone image is best, but if not available there are two traditional alternatives: 1) framed picture, preferably with a sheet of copper on the back, or 2) a *kumbha,* which is a symbol of Gaṇeśa made by placing a coconut on a brass pot of water with five mango leaves inserted between the coconut and the pot. The coconut should be husked but still have the fibers on the top. (See illustration on p. 234.) Bathing the God's image, or *mūrti,* is part of the pūjā. For this, special arrangements may need to be made. Most simply, the *mūrti* may be placed in a deep tray to catch the water. After the bath, the tray is removed and the *mūrti* dried off, then dressed and decorated. More elaborately, a drain may be set up so the water flows into a pot at the side of the altar. This blessed water is later served by the *pujārī,* who places a small spoonful in each devotee's right palm.

Pūjā Items

Pūjā implements for the shrine are kept on a large metal tray. On it are arranged ghee lamps, bells, cups, spoons and small pots to hold the various sacraments. Available from Indian shops, these are dedicated articles, never used for purposes other than pūjā. The necessary items are:

1. two water cups and a small spoon for offering water;
2. a small brass cup of unbroken, uncooked rice mixed with enough turmeric powder to turn the rice yellow;
3. a tray or basket of freshly picked flowers (without stems);
4. a standing oil lamp, *dīpastambha,* which remains lit throughout the pūjā (and ideally kept lit through the day).
5. a *dīpa* (lamp with cotton string wick) for waving light before the Deity;
6. a small metal bell, *ghaṇṭā;*
7. an incense holder and a supply of incense sticks, *agarbhatti;*
8. a container of holy ash, *vibhūti;*
9. a small cup of sandalwood paste, *chandana;*
10. a small container of red powder, *kuṅkuma;*
11. *naivedya,* fresh fruit and/or a covered dish of freshly cooked food (most often rice) to offer the Deity;
12. a camphor (*karpura)* burner for passing the sacred flame before the God at the height of the pūjā.
13. Additional items often include small Indian pots for bathing the *mūrti,* colorful clothing for dressing the *mūrti,* garlands and additional oil lamps to light and decorate the room, and an audio player.

Restrictions from Entering a Shrine

Before entering the shrine room, all attending the ceremony bathe, dress in clean clothes and bring a small offering of flowers or fruit (prepared before bathing). It is traditional for women during their monthly period to refrain from attending pūjā, entering the shrine or temple or approaching swāmīs or other holy men. Also during this time women do not help in pūjā preparation, such as picking flowers or making *prasāda* for the Deity. At this time of retreat, ladies are allowed to rest and perform private *sādhanas*, such as haṭha yoga, japa, *prāṇāyāma,* meditation and reading the holy texts.

This same rule applies to men or women with injuries that are in the process of healing; minor scratches are excepted. Cuts and injuries that bleed, internal bleeding and operations create psychic openings in the *prāṇic* aura that render the worshiper vulnerable to intrusion from lower astral Naraka denizens, who

may enter or draw out energy and do damage with that energy. The period of retreat extends until the bleeding stops and there is no more danger of infection. A minor cut or scratch may reach this point within a few hours. A deeper cut will generally take two or three days to knit to the point that no restriction is required. A severe wound may take ten days or longer. A major operation, such as heart surgery, caesarean section or appendicitis, might require several weeks or even longer before the person feels whole again. This means that you do not go to a Hindu temple to get healed from injuries such as these, though loved ones can go to pray on your behalf.

When I was in Jaffna in 1948 and 1949, living as a guest in the homes of strict Śaivite Hindus, I was impressed that they had a small house made of thatched *cajan* at the far end of the family compound where the women of the household went for three or four days or more each month until their period was over. During this time, they did not cook for the family or perform any of their regular duties. They had a time of complete solitude. No conjugal relations were engaged in during that time. Before reentering the family home, clothing and cloth that had blood on it were burned. Women bathed, donning new clothes when they were ready to return to the home, shrine room and normal duties. This all made a strong *saṁskāra,* a deep impression, on my mind. The same custom was followed by the Hawaiians and other ancient ethnic communities. The custom protects the temple from *asuric* intrusion.

There is another important form of retreat followed by all knowledgeable Hindus. I have codified this restriction in sūtra 269 of *Living with Śiva:* "Śiva's devotees must observe a period of thirty-one days following the birth or death of a family member during which they do not enter temples or home shrines, perform worship rites or attend auspicious events." Japa and other personal *sādhanas* can and should be continued during this time. The judgment of who is part of the family rests on the shoulders of the family itself.

Special Offerings to Lord Gaṇeśa

During festivals and special pūjās it is customary to decorate the offering tray, altar and shrine room with sugarcane stalks, whole saffron plants with root attached, coconuts and banana leaves or even whole banana trees. Every variety of fruit is acceptable, notably bananas, mangos, limes, pomegranates and jackfruit. The elephant comes from the forest, and so the elephant-faced Deity's temple or shrine is made to look like a small forest on festival days sacred to Him. Of course, *modaka* balls and other sweets are Lord Gaṇeśa's favorite treat.

Thiru M. Arunachalam provides some insights into Gaṇeśa's most traditional flower offerings: "In the matter of floral worship, two articles are considered very important to Gaṇeśa. One is the *aruhu* grass blade. The tip of the grass shoot is collected in sufficient quantities for floral *archana* [chanting the names of the Lord while offering flowers]. *Aruhu* is the most common grass, a weed in the cultivated gardens. It is the common *hariali* grass *(durva* in Sanskrit and botanically *Cynodon dactylon).* It is generally collected for worship with three blades or five blades. Sometimes it is made into a wreath and placed on the shoulders of Gaṇeśa. The second is the *erukku (Calotropis)* flower.... *Erukku* flowers are stringed together and placed round the crown and neck of Gaṇeśa" (*Festivals of Tamil Nadu*, p. 117).

Instructions for Pūjā

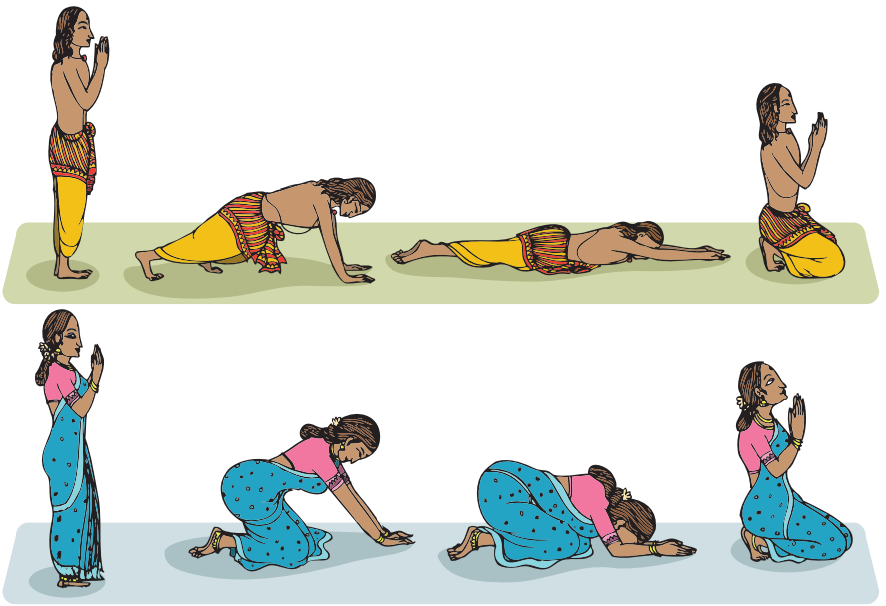
In performing pūjā, preparation is of utmost importance—gathering flowers, cleaning the altar and pūjā tray, making ready the oil lamps and preparing the fruit and/or cooked food offering. It is common to chant the 108 or 1,008 holy names of our loving Gaṇeśa or to softly sing devotional songs while performing these tasks. This quiets the mind of devotees and brings their awareness close to Him. Indeed, all this preparation is an integral part of worship.

Before beginning the pūjā, check the altar to make sure all necessary articles are there—for having to get a missing item later would disrupt the flow of pūjā. Hold the attitude that, as *pujārī,* you are a servant of the Gods, a channel for the spiritual energies. Only thoughts of God are on your mind as you perform pūjā, thus allowing the outpouring of Divine blessings.

All items are arranged the same way for each pūjā so they can be reached automatically when needed, with those most frequently used closest to hand. Tradition provides a caution: you should never perform pūjā during or shortly after experiencing anger, deep emotional upset or crying, but it would be all right to attend. Pūjā is a yoga, or link, between this and inner worlds. Therefore, you must be at your best in mood and emotion to assist in making this connection. Before performing pūjā, you should be freshly dressed, clean and undistracted by daily concerns. Having bathed beforehand, enter the shrine room and prostrate, this being the only time you prostrate until the conclusion of the pūjā.

The form of prostration differs for men and women. Men perform "eight-limbed obeisance," *ashṭāṅga praṇāma,* a fully prone pose in which hands, chest, forehead, knees and feet touch the ground. Women perform "five-limbed obeisance," *pañchāṅga praṇāma,* a kneeling pose in which hands, head and legs

touch the ground (with ankles crossed, right over the left). Another term for prostration is *praṇipāta,* "falling down in obeisance." (Illustration below.)



Pūjā Procedures

When everything is ready, take your seat in a cross-legged posture in front of and to the left of the altar, facing the Deity but turned slightly to the right. Close your eyes, sit quietly for a moment and tune your nerve system to God Gaṇeśa and the sacred pūjā you are about to perform. If others are attending, be careful not to sit directly in front of the Deity, thereby blocking their view of the altar. Generally one remains seated throughout the ritual, though in some shrines it may be more comfortable to stand during the *āratī* or throughout the pūjā. When small children are in the home, the shrine room is locked so they do not disturb the contents. If a lockable room is not available, the altar is raised so as to be out of reach, and the pūjā is performed standing up. Those attending will usually sit during most of the ceremony, then stand during the main *āratī.* However, this again may be left to individual discretion in consideration of the height of the shrine.

During the ritual, you will be making many offerings to the God. All offerings are made with the right hand, never the left, though there are occasions when both hands are used and the left hand is held under the right hand, as if supporting it. When done correctly, this makes a beautiful gesture of sincere offering.

Offering Food

The offering of food is an important part of pūjā. Traditionally a simple dish of cooked rice is prepared especially for the Deity, with cooking utensils reserved for this purpose alone. If cooked food is not offered, then freshly cut fruit may be substituted. Keep the offering covered until the point in the pūjā when the *prāṇas* (life energies) of the food are offered to the Deity. Keeping the food covered helps to preserve purity and contain the *prāṇas,* which the Gods and devas can see, absorb, enjoy and reflect back into the auras of devotees to cleanse them. After the pūjā, the food offerings—along with holy ash *(vibhūti),* sacred water *(tīrtha),* sandalwood paste *(chandana),* red powder *(kuṅkuma)* and flowers *(pushpa)*—are passed out and enjoyed as *prasāda.*

A recording of sacred chanting from the *Vedas* is played softly before the pūjā. At the high point, as the *āratī* is presented, loud drums and *nāgasvaras* resound. As the sacraments are passed out by the *pujārī,* the divine *rāgas* are heard softly played on the vīṇā as everyone enjoys quiet meditation, internalizing their worship.

Meditating after Pūjā

After the sacraments are passed out, ask everyone present to chant Aum three times and then to sit quietly and internalize worship on God within them. In the Siddhānta tradition, externalized worship is followed by internalized worship. This is because all the *prāṇas* invoked during the pūjā must be transferred into the devotees. This is accomplished by japa yoga, which quiets the external mind and brings one into a state of meditation, awareness aware of itself without distraction. The simple practice of mentally chanting Aum many, many times followed by a period of meditation and self-reflection alone makes devotees strong enough to face the external world with enhanced willpower, true confidence and a heart filled with love, realizing that we are truly one world, one family.

Visualize Gaṇeśa sitting on the *mūlādhāra* chakra, Murugan on the *maṇipūra* and Śiva on the *sahasrāra* chakra. This chakra bhakti makes worshipers strong and prepares them inwardly to face with confidence the karmas of the day. Encourage everyone to sit quietly for a while to enjoy the śakti of the *sānnidhya,* the ever-present feeling of the Divine, that the God, Gods, inner-plane gurus and devas suffuse in the shrine room; for during the pūjā, you and all attending had lost physical, emotional and intellectual consciousness, having been so intently focused upon the God you were devotionally invoking. Now everyone should be encouraged by you to turn awareness within to the true Self. While

holding within your mind the image of the God you have been worshiping, become conscious of the God consciousness of the energy of all your bodies, of the movement of the breath, of the light that lights your thoughts, of the divine energy that pervades the universe, and of the high-pitched "eee" sound that is heard ringing in the head like a million temple bells. Intuit these five as coming directly from God within. When you have experienced all these at at the same time, you have attained the five-fold God consciousness.

Internalizing worship in this way gives you and all members of the family strength to face the outside world, its daily challenges and, yes, school tests. Internalizing worship is the core of the Sanātana Dharma. It is the root, stem and blossom of the highest chakra, the 1,000-petalled lotus. It is the force that gives the strength to resist temptation, to turn others from their bad ways and to face up to and live through birth karmas, *prārabdha* karmas, that are brought with you in this life. It gives the courage to resist making new, especially unwanted, karmas to be faced at a later date. It gives the willpower needed in this Kali Yuga to survive. It gives the love which provokes the understanding to overlook and forgive, then forget. Finally, internalized worship gives the peace of mind, the *śānti,* in which all saints, sages, mahātmas and great seers dwell, in their jñāna of how things work in their universe, of which we are a vital part.

Gaṇeśa Pūjā for the Home Shrine

The Gaṇeśa pūjā presented in the following pages consists of several chants to be intoned while performing the indicated actions and visualizations. Each chant is given in three forms, first in Devanāgarī script, second in transliterated English, and third in a freely-rendered English translation. To the left of the transliteration are brief procedural cues.

There are few restrictions on the performance of the pūjā to loving Gaṇeśa. There are more temples, roadside and home shrines to Him than to any other of the 330 million Gods in the pantheon of Sanātana Dharma. He understands life as it is. Fathers, mothers, children, grandparents, widows, divorcees and divorcés all may perform His worship in home shrines where no *yantra* has ceremoniously been installed through the traditional *bālasthāpana* ceremony. He knows the world and all its worldliness. He enjoys the worship of His devotees. Although Himself a *śākāhārī*, that is, a vegetarian, He gladly accepts even the worship of devotees who include meat, fish, fowl, eggs or bugs in their diet at home. He is literate in every language of the world at any given time, but loves those unknowing of languages no less than those who are multilingual. Even though He is a virgin, He welcomes the worship of those who have enjoyed the

specious pleasures of promiscuity. He, our loving Gaṇeśa, is the God of humans and all sentient beings. But beware, He will guide them slowly in inscrutable ways. The "druggies" will become drugless, the *mānsāhārī,* meat eaters, will become "veggies" and none will ever know what happened. He will prick their conscience so that guilt comes up and lift their soul to heights sublime. Therefore, even if you do not know Sanskrit, His favorite language among all His other favorite languages, you may perform this worship to Him in English or in any other language it would be easily translated into, and He will hear. Yes, He will hear.

Sanskrit Pronunciation

The chants of the simple Gaṇeśa pūjā given here are in Sanskrit, Hinduism's ancient scriptural language. How well you pronounce Sanskrit depends entirely on how well you learn the basic sounds of the alphabet. No amount of memorization or practice of the pūjā verses alone will take the place of learning the alphabet, because without mastering the sounds, your chanting will not be perfect. Time spent mastering the pronunciation is time well spent. You will then be able to read and chant the verses properly. The best way to approach the study is through learning to read the Devanāgarī, the Sanskrit script, because it most perfectly conveys the nuances of the language. However, many people find the chants more approachable in transliterated English. A key to Sanskrit pronunciation for the transliteration system used in this book is given at the end of the glossary.

Our Sacred Hindu Temple Priesthoods

An additional word here about those refined souls who have guided the worshipful ways of Hindus for so many centuries may be useful. Our priesthoods in Hinduism are trained from birth to be exceedingly loving, generous and gently humble. They live, as they are taught, an unworldly existence; and there are some people, sad to say, who take advantage of their unassuming ways. Our priests are raised as children in ancestral schools called *pāṭhaśālas.* All temples throughout the world have priests who are well trained in performing the arts of Parārtha pūjā (temple liturgy), consecration of temples, *saṁskāras* (sacraments), home blessings, purification of new properties and more.

These priests, when approached in the proper attitude, will be happy to teach you the Sanskrit alphabet and how to perform this Gaṇeśa pūjā properly. Most, if not all, will say their service is freely given and they expect nothing. But by tradition it is the duty of the recipient to give a *dakshiṇā,* gifts from you

periodically as your study progresses and a larger one at the end, which is mandatory. However, the priest has been trained to say no three times and then accept in great reluctance. Just because he says no once or twice does not mean that you can keep your gift and go home with it.

This protocol must be gone through. A subtle way is to give a fruit offering with a gift of money in an envelope tucked in among the fruits. He will readily accept the tray and offer the fruits to the God and keep the envelope for himself as his *dakshiṇā.* Culturally, this refined mode of compensation is very different from hiring and paying a salary to a person. The Indian spiritual tradition avoids the sense of employer-employee relationship in an attempt to keep the relationship highly spiritual, elevated beyond the business of the day. Knowing this, it becomes the responsibility of the community to generously compensate priests. The unfailing law of karma will eventually pay everyone back double what they gave.

This *dakshiṇā* is an important part of a priest's livelihood. As a practical guideline, the amount should be pro-rated according to how many hours they have served or taught you. The per-hour rate must be comparable to the pay rate of any other highly skilled person within your community. It is not, for instance, equitable to pay a pittance in U.K. pounds with the explanation that this is more than the priest would make in Chennai. Service in the U.K. is rightly given in accordance with British wages, not wages in India.

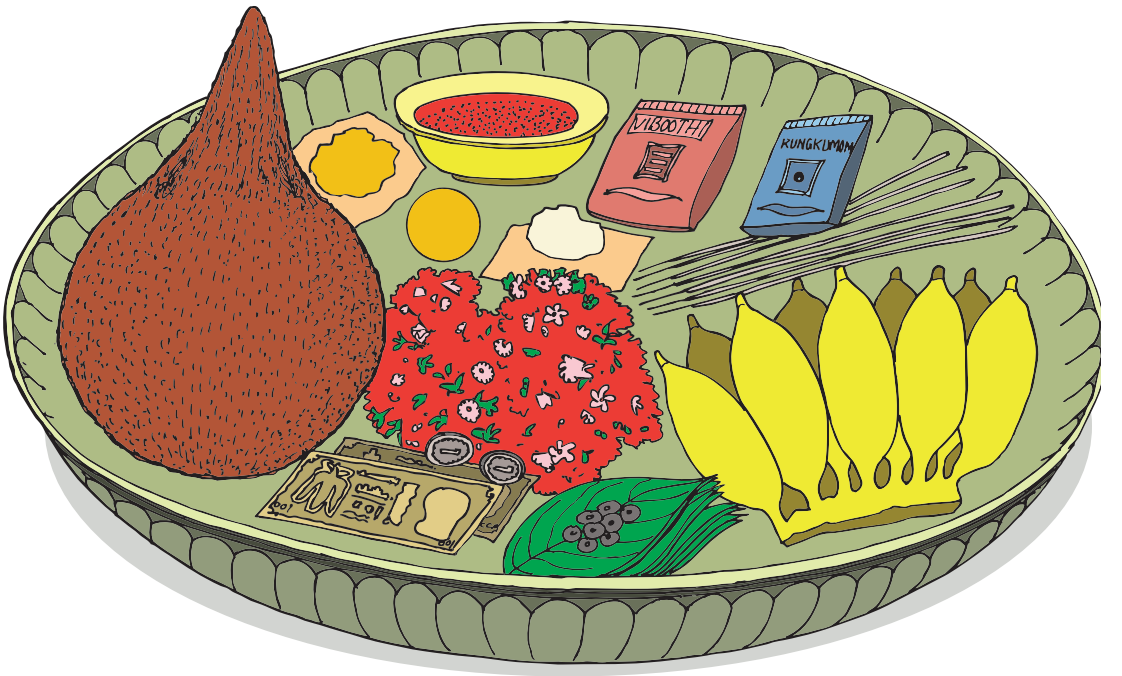
It should be very clear that priests are not the servants of the devotees or of temple managers. Their knowledge, their skills and their spirit of devotion are what attract devotees to the temple. Imagine a temple with no priest in it. It would be a silent museum or art gallery—nothing more. As temple managers never want to experience the wrath of angry priests, they treat God's servants with reverance and respect. There is a white magic that happens during pūjā that no one can really explain. It is a parapsychology that takes place beyond the boundaries of the intellect. Priests brought up in loving and kindly ways, who have never had to succumb to corporal punishment, perform the best. Those who have been abused and are vunerable to angry moods are capable, when driven to it by employers, of turning their talent toward the blacker arts and invoking *asuric* forces when performing the exact same pūjās while in an angry, lower state of mind. Many newly founded temples in the West have painfully experienced this phenomenon time and again.

Vibhūti, Holy Ash

Holy ash, *vibhūti*, connotes purity and is a reminder to us of life's precious transitoriness. It is prepared by burning cow dung into a whitish ash. An essential sacrament at Śaiva pūjā, men wear it as the *tripuṇḍra,* a sectarian mark of three lines across the forehead, signifying the burning away of *pāśa*—the bonds of *āṇava* (veil of duality), *karma* (effects of past deeds) and *māyā* (the world). Women often wear a light film of ash across the forehead. Seen from devonic realms, holy ash has a bright phosphorescent glow, and wearing it helps the devas and the Deities see devotees more clearly.

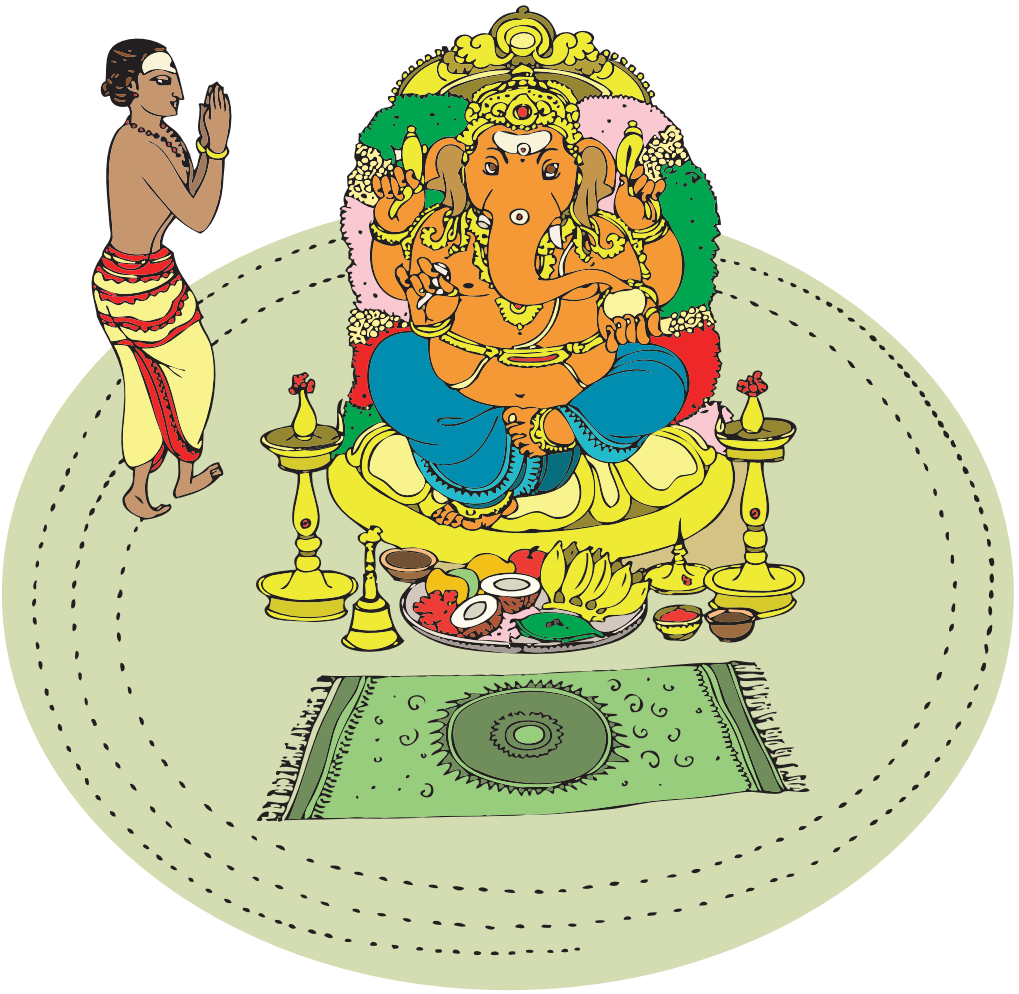
Pottu or Bindu, the Forehead Dot

The *bindu,* "dot," worn between the eyes just below the middle of the forehead, identifies one as a Hindu. It is made of red powder *(kuṅkuma),* sandalpaste, clay, cosmetics or other substances. Mystically it represents the "third eye," our inner, superconscious vision, which sees what the physical eyes cannot see, reminding us to cultivate our higher spiritual faculties and insight. The *bindu (pottu* in Tamil) is also a beauty mark for Hindu women, the color red generally being a sign of marriage. Unmarried women usually wear a small black *pottu* with a short horizontal stroke of *vibhūti* just above.



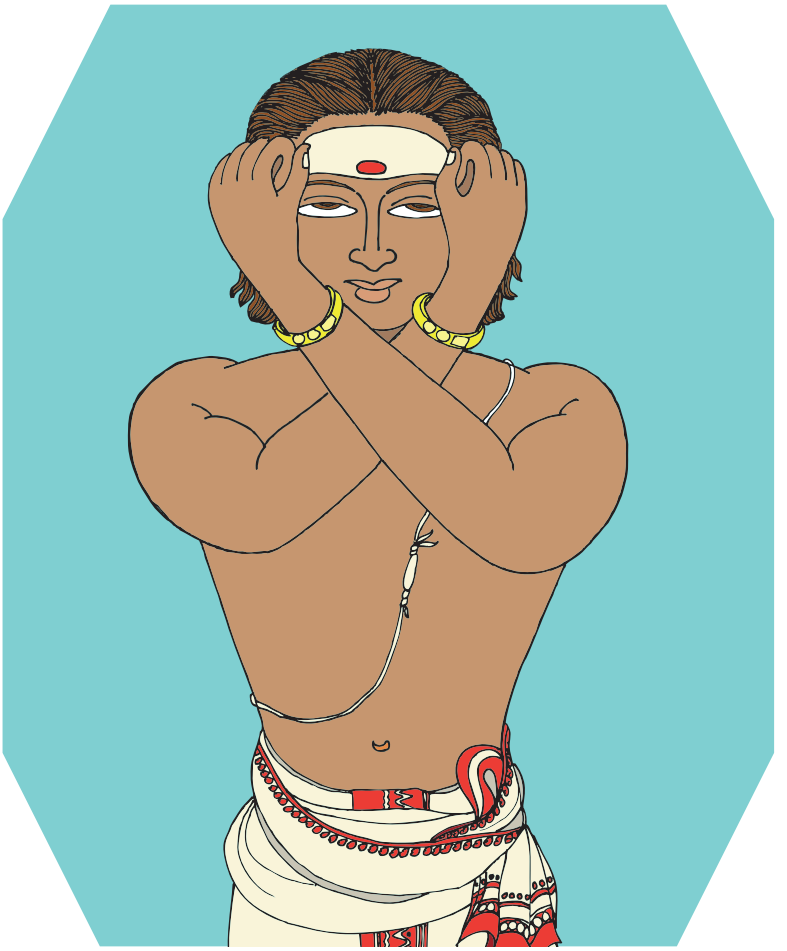
Temple Offering Tray

When going to a temple to attend pūjā, devotees bring a sacred offering tray or basket. The offerings can be prepared at home or sometimes purchased in small stalls near the temple entrance. Traditionally, the offerings include: 1) a fresh husked coconut; 2) a garland of fresh flowers; 3) a few sticks of incense; 4) fresh fruits, e.g., banana, lime, mango; 5) a package of vibhūti (holy ash); 6) kuṅkuma (red powder); 7) sandalwood powder; 8) a packet of camphor; 9) a small bottle of rosewater; 10) a *modaka* or other sweet (optional); and 11) a financial contribution for the temple or the officiating priests.



Pradakshiṇā, Circumambulation

Before worship, and sometimes during the pūjā, we walk three times around the Deity, the shrine or the temple. This is called *pradakshiṇā,* "right-facing," referring to keeping the Deity on our right by walking clockwise, never counterclockwise. By this custom we deliberately withdraw our awareness from worldly matters and direct it toward the Divine. As we circle the God, subtle psychic worldly bonds that naturally accumulate during the day in the human aura are broken. Thus, circumambulating the Lord three times brings us into a pure, one-pointed, worshipful state of consciousness.

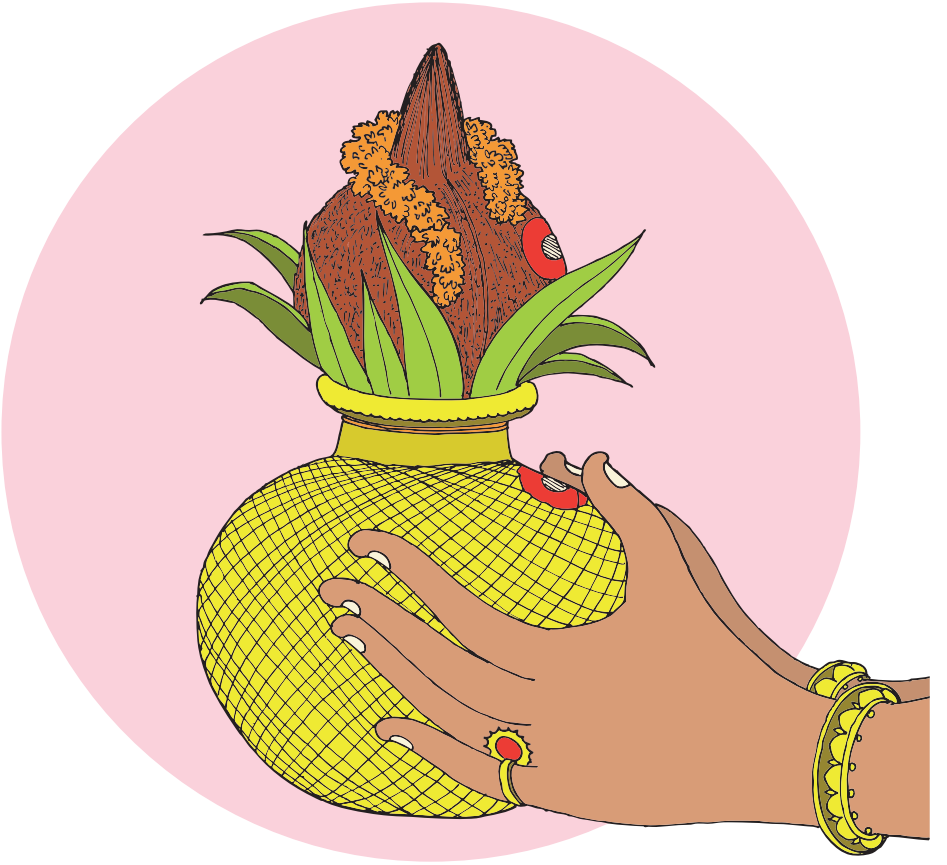


Śaṅkhaprahati, Knocking the Temples

When worshiping Lord Gaṇeśa, standing before His shrine, devotees may tap the temples gently three times with the knuckles, fists closed and arms crossed in front of the face. Esoterically, this action is said to stimulate certain nerves within the head to catalyze the flow of *amṛita* (nectar) from the *sahasrāra* chakra at the crown of the head, giving *abhisheka* (ritual bath) to Lord Gaṇeśa, Who sits on the *mūlādhāra* chakra at the base of the spine. It is a gesture of submission, beseeching forgiveness for errors, remembrance of Gaṇeśa's presence and supplication of the grace of this loving God.

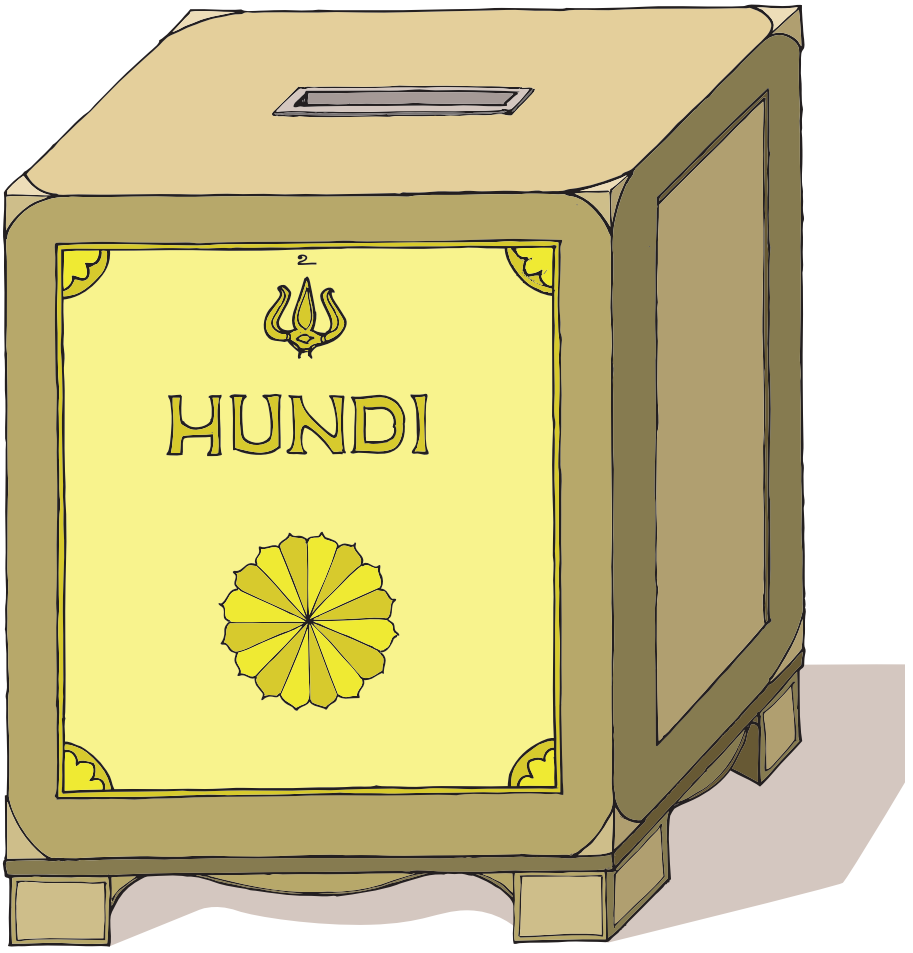
Pālīkarsha, Pulling the Ears

After knocking the temples lightly, devotees will often pull gently on the ear lobes with arms crossed, while bobbing up and down by bending the knees and bowing forward slightly. This rather humorous gesture is an expression of humility, a recognition that all souls are children in the eyes of God. Pulling the ears is done to draw Lord Gaṇeśa's loving attention to His self-effacing, self-erasing servant and submission of transgressions at His holy feet. Mystically, it stimulates important *nāḍīs,* inner nerve currents to help internalize awareness for ritual worship, pūjā, and meditation, *dhyāna.*



Gaṇapati Kalaśa—Water Pot and Coconut

The *kalaśa* (or *kumbha),* a water pot topped with mango leaves and a husked coconut, may represent the Deity on home altars and at special temple pūjās. Coconuts are especially sacred to Lord Gaṇeśa, and many are broken and offered at His temples and shrines. Breaking a coconut during prayer symbolizes the shattering of the ego, which must be surrendered lest it obstruct true worship through its desires and intrigues. Breaking the coconut's rough, hard shell to reveal the ripe fruit within is likened to shattering our brittle shell of ignorance to reveal the sweet spiritual truths inside.



Huṇḍi, Temple Offering Box

In the Hindu temple there is always a strongbox, small or large, into which devotees may offer a sacrifice to perpetuate the temple and its charitable works. When our prayers are answered, when God has shown us His grace and we seek to support His home on Earth, we place money or other valuables, such as jewels, gold and silver, into the *huṇḍi*. In many temples, the donations are counted before the Deity each evening. To support the priests and their families, we place a separate and usually smaller contribution, called dakshiṇā, on the offering tray, traditionally wrapped in betel leaf.

Gaṇeśa Pūjā

गणेशपूजा

A Traditional Daily Worship Ceremony Performed in the Home
Shrine to Beseech God Gaṇeśa's Blessings and Protection

PREPARATION & PURIFICATION

आचमनम्

Ācamanam

Water Sipping by the Pūjāri

ॐ सुमुखाय स्वाहा
ॐ एकदन्ताय स्वाहा
ॐ गजकर्णकाय स्वाहा

Oṁ sumukhāya svāhā
Oṁ ekadantāya svāhā
Oṁ gajakarṇakāya svāhā

Aum! Hail to the God whose face is always shining!
Aum! Hail to the God who has only one tusk!
Aum! Hail to the God with huge elephant ears!

Holding the spoon with your left hand, take a spoonful of water from the cup and place it in the right palm to rinse the hand, letting the excess fall onto the floor or a tray. Put another spoonful of water into the right hand, intone "Aum sumukhāya svāhā" and sip the water. Repeat for the second and third lines, then rinse the right hand again.

विघ्नेश्वर प्रार्थना

Vighneśvara Prārthanā

Ganeśa Invocation

ॐ सुक्लांबरधरं विष्णुं शशिवर्णं चतुर्भुजम् ।
प्रसन्नवदनं ध्यायेत् सर्वविघ्नोपशान्तये ॥

Namaskāram, knock temples, namaskāram.

Oṁ śuklāmbaradharaṁ viṣṇuṁ śaśivarṇaṁ caturbhujam
prasanna-vadanaṁ dhyāyet sarvavighnopaśāntaye

Aum. O Lord dressed in splendid white, pervading the universe, shining radiantly like rays of the full moon, having four mighty arms and a charming, happy face, we meditate on you that all obstacles may be quelled.

Salute Lord Gaṇeśa on the altar by holding your hands in añjali mudrā, the prayerful pose. Then, while reciting the verse, cross your arms before your face and tap your temples lightly with your knuckles three times, the left hand tapping the right temple and vice versa. This is a traditional way of supplicating Lord Gaṇapati. The place to knock is the bony, protruding part toward the front. Return your hands to añjali mudrā while reciting the last words of the chant.

संकल्पम्

Saṅkalpam

Dedication of pūjā, statement of purpose

ॐ अद्य पूर्वोक्त एवंगुणसकल
विशेषेण विशिष्टायां अस्यां शुभतिथौ
ॐ महागणेश्वर उद्दिश्य महागणेश्वरप्रीत्यर्थं
महागणेश्वरप्रसादसिद्ध्यर्थं
यथा शक्ति (chant city) देशे (chant period of the day from list below)
ध्यानावाहनादि गणेशपूजां करिष्ये ।
ॐ अप उपस्पृश्य

Hold rice and flower in closed right hand at chest.

Oṁ adya pūrvokta evaṅguṇasakala
viśeṣeṇa viśiṣṭāyāṁ asyāṁ śubhatithau

Toss rice and flower. Rinse hands.

Oṁ Mahāgaṇeśvara uddiśya Mahāgaṇeśvara-prītyartham
Mahāgaṇeśvara-prasāda-siddhyartham
yathā śakti (chant city) deśe

(insert the time of day)

dhyānāvāhanādi Gaṇeśapūjāṁ kariṣye |
Oṁ apa upaspṛśya

Insert the appropriate period of the day in the chant above.

उषः काल	ushaḥ kāla, dawn
प्रातः काल	prātaḥ kāla, morning
मध्याह्नकाल	madhyāhnakāla, noon

सायङ्काल	sāyaṅkāla, evening
ऊर्ध्वयामकाल	ūrdhvayāmakāla, night

At this particularly auspicious moment, time and place, on this auspicious day, so that we may realize the fullness of your grace, to the best of our ability this (insert time of day) Gaṇeśa pūjā we shall now perform. Aum. By touching pure water we become pure.

While reciting this statement of purpose, take a pinch of rice and hold it at chest height in your closed right palm, with open left hand underneath. Insert the time of day and the place where indicated. As you chant the last word, karishye, *gently toss the rice toward the base of the image. Then, with the left hand, place a spoonful of water into your right palm and ritually wash both hands with the water by wiping the palms together a few times as you recite "Aum apa upa spṛiśya." Once the saṅkalpam has been chanted, the pūjā must not be interrupted or abandoned until the concluding mantras are recited.*

WORSHIP AND OFFERINGS BEGIN

आवाहनम् आसनम्

Āvāhanam, Āsanam

Welcoming and Offering a Seat

(Offer rice three times.)

ध्यायामि ।
आवाहयामि ।
रत्नसिंहासनं समर्पयामि ।

dhyāyāmi |
āvāhayāmi |
ratnasiṅhāsanaṁ samarpayāmi |

We now meditate on you, O Lord, and invite you to sit upon the jewel-studded, lion throne we have prepared for you.

Offer a pinch of rice to the Deity as you chant each of the three words before "samarpayāmi." Visualize Gaṇeśa seated on a gem-studded throne before you, smiling, full of blessings, waiting to be honored as a guest in your home.

अर्घ्यम्
Arghyam
Washing the Lord's Feet and Hands

पादयोः पाद्यं पाद्यं समर्पयामि ।
हस्तयोः अर्घ्यं अर्घ्यं समर्पयामि ।
pādayoḥ pādyaṁ pādyaṁ samarpayāmi |
hastayoḥ arghyaṁ arghyaṁ samarpayāmi |

We now humbly bathe each of Your white lotus feet and gently wash each of Your precious hands, Lord Gaṇeśa.

With your right hand offer a spoonful of pure water by holding it up before the Deity momentarily and then placing it in the tīrtha cup. This is how all water offering is done throughout the pūjā. As you chant the first line, visualize yourself bathing the feet of Gaṇeśa. Offer a second spoonful of pure water as you intone the next line and visualize yourself washing His hands

आचमनम्
Ācamanam
Offering Water to Quench His Thirst

ॐ भूर्भुवः सुवः
आचमनीयं समर्पयामि ।
Oṁ bhūr-bhuvaḥ suvaḥ
ācamanīyaṁ samarpayāmi |

Aum! In all three worlds, we humbly offer you fresh, pure water for sipping.

Offer a spoonful of pure water to Gaṇeśa. Visualize His accepting it in His hand and sipping it.

स्नानम्
Snānam
Ritual Bathing

ॐ सुरसिन्धुसमानीतं सुवर्णकलशास्थितम् ।
स्नानार्थं गृह्यतां शम्भो सलिलं विमलं गणेश ॥
गङ्गास्नानं समर्पयामि ।

Ringing bell, hold flower and sprinkle mūrti. Set bell down.

Oṁ surasindhu-samānītaṁ suvarṇakalaśāsthitam |
snānārthaṁ gṛhyatām śambho salilaṁ vimalaṁ Gaṇeśa ||
gaṅgāsnānaṁ samarpayāmi |

O Beloved Lord Gaṇeśa! cause of happiness! please accept this water that was brought from the Ganges in a golden pot, clean and free from all impurity, for the purpose of your bath. I have bathed you in sacred Gaṅgā water.

While ringing the bell and reciting this verse, dip a flower into the tīrtha water and gently sprinkle the Deity. Do this three times or more. Hold the flower in your right hand in the mṛigi mudrā, the stem between your third and fourth fingers. If the altar design allows, you may pour water over the mūrti, rather than sprinkling it during this chant.

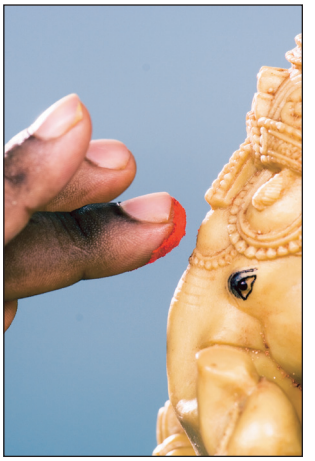
अलङ्कारम्
Alaṅkāram
Adornment and Offerings

वस्त्रार्थं मङ्गलाक्षतान् समर्पयामि
उपवीतार्थं मंगलाक्षतान् समर्पयामि
ॐ गन्धं गृहाण सुरभिमन्धकासुरसूदन ।
कुकुंमादिसमायुक्तं कुलाचलनिकेतन ॥
दिव्यपरिमलविभूति-चन्दन-कुंकुमं-समर्पयामि ।

Adorn the Deity. Apply vibhūti, sandalwood paste and kuṅkuma.

vastrārthaṁ maṅgalākṣatān samarpayāmi
upavītārthaṁ maṅgalākṣatān samarpayāmi
Oṁ gandhaṁ gṛhāṇa surabhim-andhakā-surasūdana |
kuṅkumādi-samāyuktaṁ kulācalaniketana ||
divyaparimala-vibhūti-candana-kuṅkumaṁ samarpayāmi |

We give you this auspicious unbroken rice, our magnificent Lord, that you may enjoy resplendent clothing. We give you auspicious unbroken rice, Lord Gaṇeśa, that you may be handsomely adorned with a white, cotton sacred thread. Aum. O Lord, the destroyer of the demon Andhakāsura, you who resides in the Himālayas, please accept the good smelling chandana with kuṅkuma and choice offerings.



Dress the Deity. Offer a pinch of unbroken rice while chanting each of the first two lines. Repeat the third and fourth lines over and over as you decorate the Deity with flowers. The last line is recited once while applying vibhūti (holy ash), chandana (sandalpaste) and kuṅkuma (red powder).

पुष्पम्
Puṣpam

Offering flowers

तदुपरि मङ्गलाक्षतान् समर्पयामि ।
पूजार्थं नानाविधपत्र-पुष्पाणि समर्पयामि ।

Offer rice, then flower(s) or more rice.

tadupari maṅgalākṣatān samarpayāmi |
pūjārthaṁ nānāvidhapatra-puṣpāṇi samarpayāmi |

We now offer this auspicious unbroken rice. And for the fulfillment of our devotion we offer fresh, blooming flowers for Your enjoyment, our peerless Lord.

A pinch of rice is offered with the first line. A handful of flowers, a single flower or a pinch of rice is offered with the second.

धूपम्
Dhūpam
Offering Incense

ॐ वनस्पत्युद्भवैः दिव्यैः नानागन्धसमन्वितैः ।
आघ्रेयधूपदीपनां धूपोऽयं प्रतिगृह्यताम् ॥
दशाङ्गं गुग्गुलोपेतं सुगन्धं सुमनोहरम् ।
आघ्रेयः सर्वदेवानां धूपोऽयं प्रतिगृह्यताम् ॥
धूपमाघ्रापयामि धूपानन्तरमाचमनीयं समर्पयामि।
मङ्गलाक्षतान् समर्पयामि।

Ringing bell, pass incense in 3 circles, then trace Aum with the incense (in Sanskrit, Tamil, Gujarati, etc.)

Oṁ vanaspatyudbhavaiḥ divyaiḥ nānāgandhasamanvitaiḥ |
āghreyadhūpadīpanāṁ dhūpo'yaṁ pratigṛhyatām ||
daśāṅgaṁ guggulopetaṁ sugandhaṁ sumanoharam |
āghreyaḥ sarvadevānāṁ dhūpo'yaṁ pratigṛhyatām ||

Ring bell loudly. Offer water. Then offer rice.

dhūpamāghrāpayāmi-dhūpānantaram-ācamanīyaṁ samarpayāmi |
maṅgalākṣatān samarpayāmi |

The finest incense, of magical qualities, of full and varied fragrances, Lord Gaṇeśa, we set aflame and offer to you in this, our home. Incense of the finest resins and perfumes, incomparable in sweetness and aroma, to be inhaled and enjoyed by you and all the Gods and devas, we offer to you in this, our home. Eagerly we offer to you, our resplendent Lord, fine resin incense, of heavenly odor, bewitching to the mind, rising out of a ghee-fed flame. We offer it to you in this, our home. This fine incense we have duly offered for your pleasure. And we again offer you cool, sweet water for sipping and auspicious unbroken rice.

During this chant, make three circles before the Deity with lighted incense held in your right hand while ringing the bell with your left hand. Complete the third circle and trace an Aum as you chant the fifth line, dhūpamāghrāpayāmi. *At that point, raise the incense higher and ring the bell louder. Put the incense down and recite the next two lines. With the first, water is offered, with the second, a pinch of rice.*

दीपम्
Dīpam
Offering the Light

ॐ साज्यवर्तित्रयोपेतं प्राज्यमङ्गलदायकम् ।
दीपं पश्य दयाराशे दीनबन्धो नमोऽस्तु ते ॥
ॐ आवाहिताभ्यः सर्वाभ्यो देवताभ्यो नमः ।
दिव्यमङ्गलदीपं सन्दर्शयामि ।
दीपानन्तरमाचमनीयं समर्पयामि ।
मङ्गलाक्षतान् समर्पयामि ।

Oṁ sājyavarti-trayopetaṁ prājyamaṅgala-dāyakam |
dīpaṁ paśya dayārāśe dīnabandho namo'stu te ||
Oṁ āvāhitābhyaḥ sarvābhyo devatābhyo namaḥ |
divyamaṅgaladīpaṁ sandarśayāmi |
dīpānantaramācamanīyaṁ samarpayāmi |
maṅgalākṣatān samarpayāmi |

O the Compassionate, the friend of devotees! See this lamp offered which is lighted with ghee and three wicks and which is the provider of abundant auspiciousness. Salutations to you! Aum! Salutations to all the Gods invoked! This divine, auspicious light we offer to you. After that, we offer you pure water for sipping and auspicious unbroken rice.

Offer the oil light to Lord Gaṇeśa and ring the bell as you chant this mantra. As with the incense, circle three times then draw the Aum with the flame. Then raise the flame and ring the bell louder, then stop ringing. Offer water, then a flower or a pinch of rice.

नैवेद्यम्
Naivedyam
Food offering

सत्यं त्वर्तेन (chant in morning)
ऋतं त्वा सत्येन (chant if evening) परिषिञ्चामि ।
ॐ अमृतमस्तु अमृतोपस्तरणमसि स्वाहा ।
ॐ गणेशाय स्वाहा । ॐ गणेशाय स्वाहा ।
ॐ गणेशाय स्वाहा ।

satyaṁ tvartena (chant if in morning)
ṛtaṁ tvā satyena (if evening) pariṣiñcāmi |
Oṁ amṛtamastu amṛtopastaraṇamasi svāhā
Oṁ gaṇeśāya svāhā | Oṁ gaṇeśāya svāh |
Oṁ gaṇeśāya svāhā |

We add Truth to Truth. Aum. May this sweet and pungent food be transformed into nectar. We humbly offer to you this food.

While reciting the first part of the mantra, uncover the food offering. Then, while chanting the last line and ringing the bell, circle a spoonful of water over the food and offer it to the Deity. While ringing the bell softly, gently waft the aroma and vital essences of the food or fruit toward the Deity. Do this by sweeping the right hand over the food with a flower held between your fingers, stem upward. The palm is facing downward as it moves over the food, then rotates upward as the sweep approaches the Deity, bringing the aroma and prāṇa toward His nose and mouth. As you complete the third line, gently toss the flower toward the feet of the Deity at the end of the sweep with all the love in your heart.

ॐ आवाहिताभ्यः सर्वाभ्यो देवताभ्यो नमः ।
नानाविधमहानैवेद्यं निवेदयामि ।
यथाशक्तिसमर्पित महानैवेद्यं कृपया स्वीकुरु ।

Oṁ āvāhitābhyaḥ sarvābhyo devatābhyo namaḥ |
nānāvidha-mahānaivedyaṁ nivedayāmi |
yathāśakti-samarpita mahānaivedyaṁ kṛpayā svīkuru |

Aum! Salutations to all the Gods invoked! Because we are offering you our very best, Lord Gaṇeśa, in all sincerity and love, please consider the essence of this food as among the finest meals you have ever received. To the best of our ability, in the worship of you, we offer this food and humbly beg that you will receive it.

Ringing the bell loudly as you recite this chant, pick up a flower or a pinch of rice and hold it at chest height in the fingertips of the right hand. As the last word is spoken, gently release the rice or flower at the feet of the Deity. Then put down the bell and raise your hands above your head in devout prayer that Gaṇeśa will accept the meal. While your hands are raised, close your eyes and visualize Gaṇeśa accepting and partaking of the meal. After a moment, lower your hands and intone Aum quietly.

विघ्नेश्वराष्टोत्तर शतनामावलिः

Vighneśvarāśṭottara Śatanāmāvaliḥ

Chanting the 108 Names of Lord Gaṇeśa

In this section of the pūjā, chant the Vighneśvarāṣṭottara Śatanāmāvaliḥ, "garland of Gaṇeśa's 108 names." As you intone each name, offer with your right hand a flower, some flower petals, a few drops of water from the spoon or a pinch of rice. The names are attributes of the Deity, each one delineating an aspect of His nature. Hold the flower basket in your left hand if you are standing, and in your lap if sitting. The bell is not rung. The names may be recited at any pace, depending on your time and ability. Each name is preceded by the mantra Aum and followed by namaḥ, meaning "obeisance, praise, adoration" or "homage" to.

	Devanagari	Transliteration	Translation
1.	ॐ विनायकाय	vināyakāya	to the remover (of obstacles)
2.	विघ्नराजाय	vighnarājāya	to the ruler of obstacles
3.	गौरीपुत्राय	gaurīputrāya	to the son of Gaurī
4.	गणेश्वराय	gaṇeśvarāya	to the lord of categories
5.	स्कन्दाग्रजाय	skandāgrajāya	to Skanda's elder brother
6.	अव्ययाय	avyayāya	to the inexhaustible one
7.	पूताय	pūtāya	to the pure one
8.	दक्षाय	dakṣāya	to the skillful one
9.	अद्यक्षाय	adyakṣāya	to the great presider
10.	द्विजप्रियाय	dvijapriyāya	to Him who loves the twice-born
11.	अग्निगर्भच्छिदे	agnigarbhacchide	to Him who pierces the womb of fire
12.	इन्द्रश्रीप्रदाय	indraśrīpradāya	to the restorer of Indra's wealth
13.	वाणीप्रदाय	vāṇīpradāya	to Him who gives eloquence
14.	अव्ययाय	avyayāya	to the inexhaustible one
15.	सर्वसिद्धिप्रदाय	sarvasiddhipradāya	to the bestower of all fulfillment
16.	शर्वतनयाय	śarvatanayāya	to the son of Śiva
17.	शर्वरीप्रियाय	śarvarīpriyāya	to Him who is fond of twilight

	Devanagari	Transliteration	Translation
18.	सर्वात्मकाय	sarvātmakāya	to Him who is the soul of all
19.	सृष्टिकर्त्रे	sṛṣṭikartre	to the Creator
20.	देवाय	devāya	to the resplendent one
21.	अनेकार्चिताय	anekārcitāya	to the one worshiped by multitudes
22.	शिवाय	śivāya	to the auspicious one
23.	शुद्धाय	śuddhāya	to the pure one
24.	बुद्धिप्रियाय	buddhipriyāya	to Him who loves intelligence
25.	शान्ताय	śāntāya	to the peaceful one
26.	ब्रह्मचारिणे	brahmacāriṇe	to the celibate one
27.	गजाननाय	gajānanāya	to the elephant-faced one
28.	द्वैमातुराय	dvaimāturāya	to Him who has two mothers
29.	मुनिस्तुत्याय	munistutyāya	to Him who is praised by sages
30.	भक्तविघ्नविनाशनाय	bhaktavighnavināśanāya	to the destroyer of devotees' obstacles
31.	एकदन्ताय	ekadantāya	to Him who has one tusk
32.	चतुर्बाहवे	caturbāhave	to Him who has four arms
33.	चतुराय	caturāya	to the ingenious one
34.	शक्तिसंयुताय	śaktisaṃyutāya	to Him who is united with power
35.	लम्बोदराय	lambodarāya	to Him who has a large belly
36.	शूर्पकर्णाय	śūrpakarṇāya	to Him with ears like winnowing fans
37.	हरये	haraye	to Him who destroys evil with lion-like courage
38.	ब्रह्मविदुत्तमाय	brahmaviduttamāya	to the foremost knower of God
39.	कालाय	kālāya	to the master of destiny
40.	ग्रहपतये	grahapataye	to the lord of planets
41.	कामिने	kāmine	to Him who is love
42.	सोमसूर्याग्निलोचनाय	somasūryāgnilocanāya	to Him whose eyes are the moon, sun and fire
43.	पाशाङ्कुशधराय	pāśāṅkuśadharāya	to the one who holds a noose and goad

	Devanagari	Transliteration	Translation
44.	चण्डाय	caṇḍāya	to the one who is fierce-looking
45.	गुणातीताय	guṇātītāya	to Him who transcends qualities
46.	निरञ्जनाय	nirañjanāya	to Him who is without blemish
47.	अकल्मषाय	akalmaṣāya	to Him who is without impurity
48.	स्वयंसिद्धाय	svayaṃsiddhāya	to Him who is self-fulfilled, perfect
49.	सिद्धार्चितपदांबुजाय	siddhārcitapadāṃbujāya	to Him whose lotus feet sages worship
50.	बीजापूरफलासक्ताय	bījāpūraphalāsaktāya	to Him who is fond of pomegranate
51.	वरदाय	varadāya	to the giver of boons
52.	शाश्वताय	śāśvatāya	to the eternal, unchanging one
53.	कृतिने	kṛtine	to the skillful one
54.	द्विजप्रियाय	dvijapriyāya	to Him who is fond of the twice-born
55.	वीतभयाय	vītabhayāya	to Him who is fearless
56.	गदिने	gadine	to Him who wields the mace
57.	चक्रिणे	cakriṇe	to Him who wields a discus
58.	इक्षुचापधृते	ikṣucāpadhṛte	to Him who holds the sugarcane bow
59.	श्रीदाय	śrīdāya	to the bestower of great wealth
60.	अजाय	ajāya	to the unborn one
61.	उत्पलकराय	utpalakarāya	to Him who holds a proud blue lotus flower
62.	श्रीपतये	śrīpataye	to the Lord of wealth
63.	स्तुतिहर्षिताय	stutiharṣitāya	to Him who delights in praise
64.	कुलाद्रिभेत्रे	kulādribhetre	to Him who supports Himālaya, His family's mountain
65.	जटिलाय	jaṭilāya	to Him who has matted hair
66.	कलिकल्मषनाशनाय	kalikalmaṣanāśanāya	to Him who destroys sins in the Kaliyuga
67.	चन्द्रचूडामणये	candracūḍāmaṇaye	to Him who wears a moon upon his head
68.	कान्ताय	kāntāya	to the beloved, loving one
69.	पापहारिणे	pāpahāriṇe	to the consumer of sins
70.	समाहिताय	samāhitāya	to Him who is absorbed in meditation

	Devanagari	Transliteration	Translation
71.	आश्रिताय	āśritāya	to Him who is our refuge
72.	श्रीकराय	śrīkarāya	to Him who manifests prosperity
73.	सौम्याय	saumyāya	to the amiable one
74.	भक्तवाञ्छितदायकाय	bhaktavāñcitadāyakāya	to the grantor of devotees' desires
75.	शान्ताय	śāntāya	to the peaceful one
76.	कैवल्यसुखदाय	kaivalyasukhadāya	to the bestower of unsullied liberation
77.	सच्चिदानन्दविग्रहाय	saccidānandavigrahāya	to the embodiment of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss
78.	ज्ञानिने	jñānine	to the great wisdom
79.	दयायुताय	dayāyutāya	to Him who is full of compassion
80.	दान्ताय	dāntāya	to Him who has self-control
81.	ब्रह्मद्वेषविवर्जिताय	brahmadveṣavivarjitāya	to Him who is free from aversion to knowledge
82.	प्रमत्तदैत्यभयदाय	pramattadaityabhayadāya	to Him who brings terror to blundering demons
83.	श्रीकण्ठाय	śrīkaṇṭhāya	to Him whose throat is beautiful
84.	विबुधेश्वराय	vibudheśvarāya	to the Lord of the wise
85.	रमार्चिताय	ramārcitāya	to Him who is worshiped by Lakshmī
86.	विधये	vidhaye	to Him who is the destiny of all
87.	नागराजयज्ञोपवीतवते	nāgarājayajñopavītavate	to Him whose sacred thread is a king cobra
88.	स्थुलकण्ठाय	sthulakaṇṭhāya	to Him who has a stout neck
89.	स्वयंकर्त्रे	svayaṃkartre	to Him who is self-created
90.	सामघोषप्रियाय	sāmaghoṣapriyāya	to Him who loves the sound of *Sāma Veda*
91.	परास्मै	parāsmai	to Him who is supreme
92.	स्थूलतुण्डाय	sthūlatuṇḍāya	to Him who has a stout trunk
93.	अग्रण्ये	agraṇye	to the leader
94.	धीराय	dhīrāya	to the courageous one
95.	वागीशाय	vāgīśāya	to the Lord of speech
96.	सिद्धिदायकाय	siddhidāyakāya	to the bestower of fulfillment

	Devanagari	Transliteration	Translation
97.	दूर्वाबिल्वप्रियाय	dūrvābilvapriyāya	to Him who loves dūrvā grass and bilva leaves
98.	अव्यक्तमूर्तये	avyaktamūrtaye	to the manifestation of the Unmanifest
99.	अद्भुतमूर्तिमते	adbhutamūrtimate	to Him of wondrous form
100.	शैलेन्द्रतनुजोत्सङ्गकेल-नोत्सुकमानसाय	śailendratanujotsaṅgakela-notsukamānasāya	to Him who is fond of playing in the lap of His mother, Pārvatī, daughter of the mountain Lord [Himavat]
101.	स्वलावण्यसुधासारजित-मन्मथविग्रहाय	svalāvaṇyasudhāsārajita-manmathavigrahāya	whose form, like the God of Love, defeats even a shower of nectar with its sweet beauty
102.	समस्तजगदाधाराय	samastajagadādhārāya	to the supporter of all the worlds
103.	मायिने	māyine	to the source of illusory power
104.	मूषिकवाहनाय	mūṣikavāhanāya	to Him who rides the mouse
105.	हृष्टाय	hṛṣṭāya	to the joyful one
106.	तुष्टाय	tuṣṭāya	to the contented one
107.	प्रसन्नात्मने	prasannātmane	to the bright, kindly-souled one
108.	सर्वसिद्धिप्रदायकाय	sarvasiddhipradāyakāya	to the grantor of all fulfillment

मन्त्र पुष्पम्

Mantra Pushpam

Worship *with flowers*

यो॑ऽपां पुष्प॒ं वेद॑। पुष्प॑वान् प्र॒जावा॑न् पशु॒मान् भ॑वति ।
च॒न्द्रमा॒ वा अ॒पां पुष्पम्॑। पुष्प॑वान् प्र॒जावा॑न् पशु॒मान् भ॑वति ।
य ए॒वं वेद॑ । यो॑ऽपामा॒यत॑नं॒ वेद॑ । आ॒यत॑नवान् भवति ॥ १ ॥
ॐ श्री महागणेश्वराय नमः मन्त्रपुष्पाञ्जलिं समर्पयामि।

Hold a double handful of flowers or rice in namaskāram.
As you complete the chanting, toss the flowers over the mūrti.

yo॑’pāṁ puṣpaṃ॒ veda॑| puṣpa॑vān praja॒vā॑n paśu॒mān bha॑vati |
ca॒ndrama॒ vā a॒pāṁ puṣpa॑ṃ| puṣpa॑vān praja॒vā॑n paśu॒mān bha॑vati |
ya e॒vaṁ veda॑ | yo॑’pāma॒yata॑naṃ॒ veda॑ | ā॒yata॑navān bhavati ||1||
Oṁ śrī mahāgaṇeśvarāya namaḥ mantrapuṣpāñjaliṁ samarpayāmi |

The one who understands the beauty of the blooming powers of the Supreme Being is blessed with beautiful, blooming life, progeny and cattle. The moon is certainly the bloom of those powers. One who realizes the qualities of the moon, which are nothing but the blooming divine powers, is blessed with a blooming, beautiful life of perfection, progeny and cattle. One who realizes this principle and realizes the source from whom all these powers have come himself becomes the abode of those divine powers. Aum, salutations, Lord Mahāgaṇeśa, we respectfully offer you this flower mantra.

While chanting this mantra, hold a handful of flowers before you in añjali mudrā, hands cupped loosely around the flowers at chest height. Recite the verses with adoration. As you intone the last word, samarpayāmi, lower your hands (as shown in the photo) and toss the flowers into the air above the murti, sending a shower of blossoms upon the God with feelings of gratitude and loving devotion.

आरती

Āratī

Worship with Flame

ॐ साज्यं त्रिवर्तिसंयुक्तं वह्निना योजितं मया ।
गृहान मङ्गलारतिं ईशपुत्र नमोऽस्तु ते ॥
ॐ आवहिताभ्यः सर्वाभ्यो देवताभ्यो नमः ।
दिव्यमङ्गलदीपं सन्दर्शयामि ।
आचमनीयं समर्पयामि । मङ्गलाक्षतान् समर्पयामि ।

Ringing bell, draw three circles in Aum. Ring bell loudly.

Oṁ sājyaṁ trivartisaṁyuktaṁ vahninā yojitaṁ mayā |
gṛhāna maṅgalāratiṁ īśa putra namo'stu te ||

Keep ringing loudly.

Oṁ āvāhitābhyaḥ sarvābhyo devatābhyo namaḥ |
divya maṅgaladīpaṁ sandarśayāmi |

Offer water. Offer rice.

ācamanīyaṁ samarpayāmi | maṅgalākṣatān samarpayāmi |

O Gaṇapati, Son of God Śiva, please accept this auspicious āratī prepared by me with ghee, three wicks and fire. My salutations to you! Aum! Salutations to all the Gods invoked! This divine, auspicious light we offer to you. After that, we offer you pure water for sipping and auspicious unbroken rice.

During this chant, hold the lit oil lamp or camphor burner in your right hand and the bell in your left. While ringing the bell and slowly reciting the āratī mantra, make three circles clockwise before Gaṇeśa with the flame. Stop at the top of the third circle, lower the lamp slightly and trace the symbol of Aum in Sanskṛit or in your native language. Then lift the flame slightly above the Aum that you placed in the ākāśic ether and ring the bell louder for all three worlds to hear. Keep ringing loudly while chanting the above two-line salutation to the devas ("āvāhitābhyaḥ … sandarśayāmi"). Put down the bell and the lamp and then, with the flame still burning, offer a spoonful of water with "āchamanīyaṁ samarpayāmi," then a pinch of rice with "maṅgalāshatān samarpayāmi."

रक्षधारणम्

Rakṣadhāraṇam

Prayer for Protection

इन्द्र स्तोमेन पञ्चदशेन
मध्यमिदं वतेन सगरेण
रक्ष रक्षां धारयामि।

Set lamp down, circle it three times with a flower

indra stomena pañcadaśena
madhyamidaṁ vatena sagareṇa
rakṣa rakṣāṁ dhārayāmi |

O Indra, Lord of material and spiritual prosperity, please protect the space between the heavens and Earth as well as the mind between the body and the soul with the help of fifteen noble powers and virtues (five prāṇas, five jñānendriyas and five karmendriyas). Your protection and blessings sustain me.

As you recite this mantra, make three circles above the burning flame with a flower held in the right hand, stem upward. With the last words, toss the flower gently toward the Deity and place your hands in añjali mudrā while facing the altar.

Now offer the flame at chest level to all present, allowing each to draw both hands through it and lightly touch the eyes three times (photo next page, upper right). The

Gods and devas can see us through the flame and send blessings. If especially honored persons are present, such as one's guru, parents or teacher, take the flame first to them. Then proceed clockwise to the others. In some cases, the pujārī may stand near the altar while devotees come forward to receive the flame. If no one is attending the pūjā, you may personally draw blessings from the flame, but not otherwise. Finally, present the flame once more to the Deity, then extinguish it with a wave of the right hand or by snuffing it out with a flower.

अर्पणम्

Arpaṇam

Final consecration

अनया यथाशक्त्या कृत *(state period of day from list below)*
पूजया भगवान् सर्वदेवात्मकः
श्रीमहागणेश्वरः सुप्रीतः
सुप्रसन्नो वरदो भवतु ।

Rice and waterin hand, offer before the Deity.

anayā yathāśaktyā kṛta (state period of day from list below)
pūjayā bhagavān sarvadevātmakaḥ
śrī Mahāgaṇeśvaraḥ suprītaḥ
suprasanno varado bhavatu

Five periods of the day (choose appropriate one for chant above)

उषः काल	ushaḥ kāla, dawn
प्रातः काल	prātaḥ kāla, morning
मध्याह्नकाल	madhyāhnakāla, noon
सायङ्काल	sāyaṅkāla, evening
ऊर्ध्वयामकाल	ūrdhvayāmakāla, night

To the best of my ability I have performed this (state time of day) pūjā and worshiped you, dear Lord, who possesses the nature of all the Gods. May you be pleased. May you be gracious, and grant my wishes, loving Gaṇeśa.

Before reciting the above verse, place a pinch of rice in your left palm, then immediately transfer it to the right palm. Add to the rice three spoonfuls of water and close the hand. Hold the rice before you as you face the Deity, the left hand under the right

hand, and recite the mantra. As you intone the last words, let the rice and water fall into the tīrtha cup. The sacraments may then be given out in the following order: vibhūti, tīrtha, chandana, kuṅkuma, naivedya and flowers. If no one is attending

the pūjā, you may partake of the sacraments yourself, but not otherwise. If many devotees are attending, a second person may help pass out the sacraments, except for the vibhūti which is always given by the person who performed the pūjā.

विसर्जनम्

Visarjanam

Farewell and Apologies

Hold hands in añjali mudrā. Prostrate after completing the chant.

ॐ आवाहनं न जानामि न जानामि विसर्जनम् ।
पूजाञ्चैव न जानामि क्षम्यतां परमेश्वर ॥
मन्त्रहीनं क्रियाहीनमं भक्तिहीनं सुरेश्वर ।
यत् पूजितं मया देव परिपूर्णं तदस्तु ते ।
अन्यथा शरणमं नास्ति त्वमेव शरणमं मम ।
तस्मात् कारुण्यभावेन रक्ष रक्ष गणेश्वर ॥ ॐ तत् सत् ॐ

Oṁ āvāhanaṁ na jānāmi na jānāmi visarjanam
pūjāñcaiva na jānāmi kṣamyatāṁ parameśvara.
mantrahīnaṁ kriyāhīnaṁ bhaktihīnaṁ sureśvara,
yat pūjitaṁ mayā deva paripūrṇaṁ tadastu te,
anyathā śaraṇaṁ nāsti tvameva śaraṇaṁ mama,
tasmāt kāruṇyabhāvena rakṣa rakṣa gaṇeśvara.
Oṁ tat sat Oṁ.

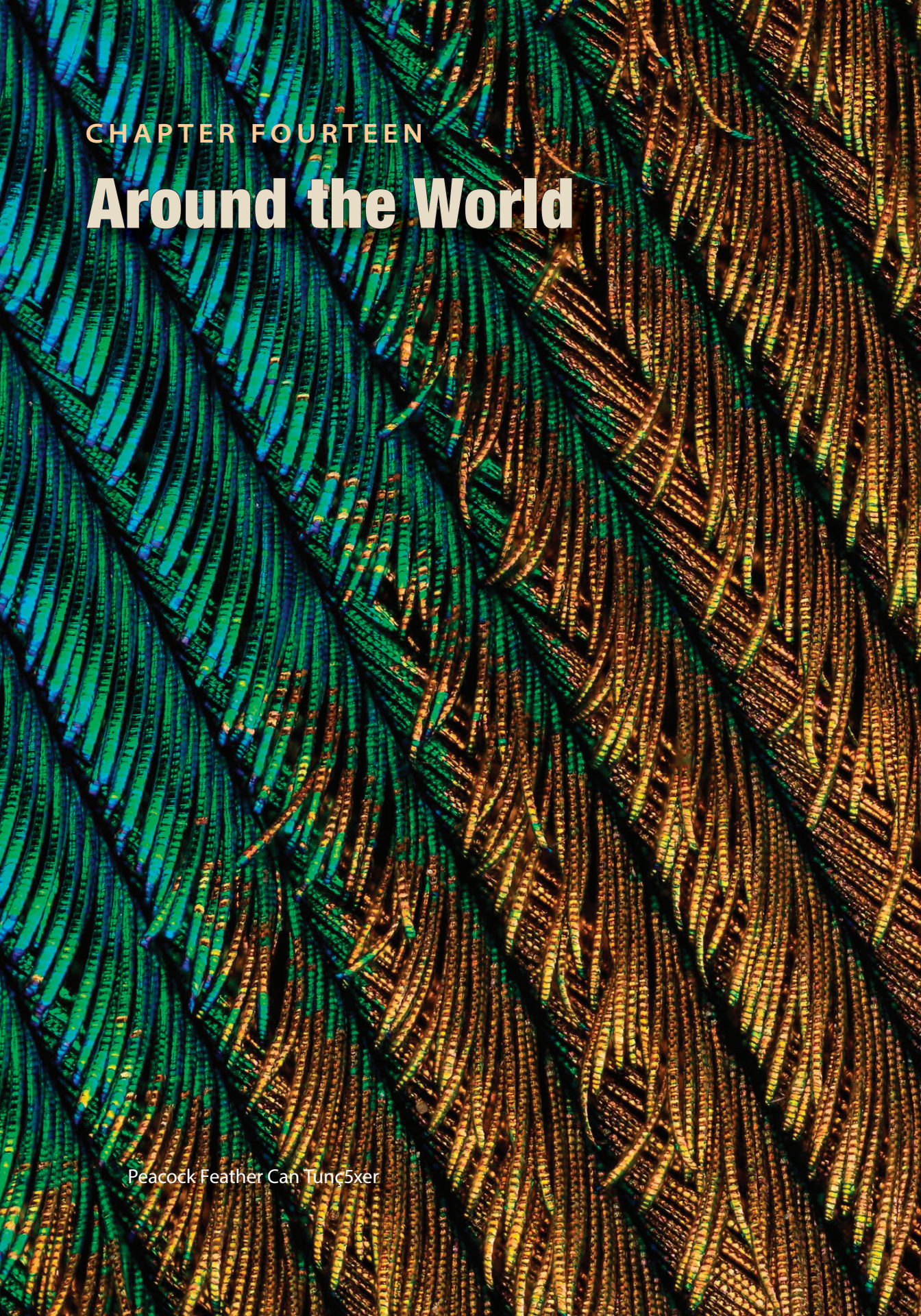
O Lord, we do not know the proper means of inviting you or, when taking our leave, how to wish you farewell. A full knowledge of priestly rites has not been imparted to us, so you must overlook and forgive any mistakes or omissions. We know little of mantras or pious conduct, and we are strangers to true bhakti. Nonetheless, please forgive us and regard our attempts as exact and complete—because you are our only refuge. With your compassionate nature, Lord Gaṇeśa, we beseech you, please protect those who pray. That which is Truth is Aum.

This concluding apology is recited with hands in añjali mudrā. It is a formal and devout end to the worship service. As the final words, "Aum tat sat Aum," are spoken, it is customary to clap your hands together three times. All may now prostrate.

It is traditional and most uplifting to meditate for a few minutes after the pūjā, rather than rushing off to daily duties. There is great personal benefit in such internalized worship, eyes closed, mind still, following, deep within yourself, the prāṇas that the pūjā has created. Externalized worship is the bhakti path; internalized worship is the yoga path. Both together make the complete circle that sustains devotees in their spiritual life, making them strong and kindly in moving the forces of the world in their daily life. This dual-pronged effort towards self-transformation and right living is the very foundation for the final goal of all seekers: moksha, freedom from rebirth.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Around the World



Peacock Feather Can Tunç5xer

Around the World

Paribhuvanam

परिभुवनम्

AHĀ GAṆAPATI, OF COURSE, BELONGS TO ALL MANKIND, NOT TO HINdus alone, though not all inhabitants of the planet call Him by our endearing name, Premavān Gaṇeśa, which means "Loving Ganeśa" in English. To the Chinese He is embodied in the form of a massive dragon, whose physical immensity depicts His incredible and irresistible force. To some Chinese He is Kuan-shi t'ien or Ho Tei, the large-bellied God of Happiness. To the Polynesians in Hawaii He is God Lono.

The South Indian and Sri Lankan Tamils call him by the affectionate term Pillaiyar, "Noble Child." The Tibetans know Him as Ts'ogsbdag, and the Burmese worship Maha-Pienne. In Mongolia, His name is Totkharour Khaghan. Cambodians offer worship to Prah Kenes, and the Japanese supplicate Vinayaksa or Sho-ten. By some He is envisioned as the feminine Mother Nature, and even nonbelievers seek to understand Him through personifying His great powers as Fate, Destiny or Numen. The ancient Egyptians may have known Him as a minor but very popular Deity, Bes, grotesque, pot-bellied and cheerful. The Romans called Him Janus and sought His blessings at the outset of any new venture. On His festival on the first of January (the month named after Him) He was treated with special cakes; mutual good wishes were exchanged and people made presents of sweets to one another for a good omen for the new year. In the West, He is ubiquitous as the corpulent jolly Santa Claus, the dispenser of boons and gifts, especially to children, who knows our thoughts, words and deeds and bestows rewards accordingly. The Buddhists and Jains also honor Gaṇeśa. In one form or another, He is honored throughout the world.

As respected author Ratna Ma Navaratnam, a devotee of Sage Yogaswami of Sri Lanka, wrote: "Gaṇeśa worship is most effective in illumining consciousness, and hence He is sought after and propitiated by the Śaivites, Vaishṇavites, Śāktas, Smārtas, Kumāras, Jains and Buddhists as the Dispeller of Obstacles" *(Aum Gaṇeśa, The Peace of God,* p. 176).

Hindus worship the great God Gaṇeśa at countless pūjās performed daily on every continent. In temples and home shrines, Lord Gaṇeśa is worshiped today in India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Malaysia, Java, Bali, Borneo, Tibet, Myanmar, Siam, Afganistan, the Middle East, China, Indo-China, Japan, the Caribbean,

Trinidad and Tobago, Hawaii and the Pacific Islands, Africa, Mauritius, Réunion, Europe, Australia, Canada, South America, the United States and elsewhere.

Every Hindu village and community has an image of the God Gaṇeśa, and one of the many forms of Gaṇeśa is found in every Hindu temple. The eminent scholar M. Arunachalam wrote, "Gaṇeśa is usually installed at the entrance to the central sanctum, at the south, and also at the southwestern corner in the first court, of every Śiva temple. Besides, He is placed on the first eastern *goshṭa* (niche) on the other southern wall of the *ardha maṇḍapa* (secondary hall) in the dancing pose, known as Nartana Gaṇapati, in many temples. The tip of His trunk will curve to the left and touch the *modaka,* generally held in the left hand. In a few rare cases, the trunk will curve to the right to touch the *modaka* on a right hand. Here He is called Valampuri (right turned) Vināyaga" *(Festivals of Tamil Nadu,* 1980, p. 112).

Roadside Shrines

While Gaṇeśa shrines are found at all Hindu temples, they frequently stand alone as well. They are often quite humble, not uncommonly a simple roadside shrine such as the one between Jaffna and Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka or along the roadsides here and there in South India. Here travelers stop to break a coconut and burn a bit of camphor before the Lord of Obstacles to pray for a safe and successful journey. There is a similar shrine near the university in Madras. Many years ago a young man discovered a tree that formed the shape of Gaṇeśa head in its gnarled trunk. He began worshiping and soon took a vow not to leave the site. He has been there, serving as a priest and doing *sādhana* for several decades now, without leaving the tiny compound. Travelers and students about to take their exams come to the shrine to seek Lord Gaṇeśa's blessings. Such tree shrines enjoy the patronage of thousands of worshipers annually.

Historically, His image is often found in places of danger, such as steep slopes, river crossings or where two roads cross. Here His *mūrti* may be a rough hewn stone or even a trunk of a bo or banyan tree which has taken the form of the God Gaṇeśa. A natural stone, or *svayambhū* ("self-created") *mūrti,* may also be the object of worship. Researcher Alice Getty wrote: "The most celebrated *svayambhū mūrtis* of Gaṇeśa are found in Kashmir, where there are three famous and most powerful formless stones which from ancient times have drawn pilgrims to their shrines. One, which is near the village of Gaṇeśbal, is in the river Lidar near its right bank, and is still an important place of pilgrimage.… Another rock in Kashmir which has been worshiped from most ancient times as a symbol of Gaṇeśa under the name of Bhimasvamin is at the foot of the hill Hari-Parbat near Srinagar.…The most remarkable of these *svayambhū mūrtis* in Kashmir is the one on a cliff along the Kishen-Gaṅgā known as Gaṇeś-Gati" *(Gaṇeśa, a Monograph on the Elephant-Faced God,* by Alice Getty, 1971, p. 22-23).

Renowned Gaṇeśa Temples

Perhaps the most famous Gaṇeśa temple in India is the Uchi Pillaiyar Koyil at Trichy. *Uchi* means "at the top." This large temple (also known as the Rock Fort Temple), built on a hilltop, commands a breathtaking view of the city and of the river Kaveri. Another large Gaṇeśa temple, built into the rock, is the Pillaiyarpatti Temple near Karaikudi in Ramanathapuram District, also in Tamil Nadu. In New Delhi there is the Siddhi Buddhi Vināyagar temple situated in Vināyanagar. The Mukkuruni Pillaiyar inside the huge Meenakshi Temple

complex in Madurai, India, is also quite famous. This *mūrti* is ten to twelve feet tall. *Mukkuruni* refers to a large measure of rice (about forty pounds). Here the priests cook a huge *modaka* ball for Gaṇeśa using this measure. Hence the name Mukkuruni Pillaiyar. Also in Madurai, Lord Gaṇeśa is worshiped as Vyāghrapāda Gaṇeśanī, in female form with tiger feet. The Gaṇeśanī *mūrti* in *sukhāsana* pose resides at Suchindram. There are two other temples in India with the female Gaṇeśa form. One is at a tenth-century temple dedicated to sixty-four *yoginīs* in Bheraghat, a village near Jabalpur. The other is the Tanumalaya Swami Temple in Suchindrum, Kerala. In Tibet, She is worshiped as Gajānanī.

A five-headed Gaṇeśa mounted on a lion resides at Nagapattinam. At Vellore, India, Gaṇeśa is enshrined as Valampuri Vināyakar, with his trunk turned to the right instead of to the left. This *mūrti* is considered very auspicious. Highly revered Gaṇeśa shrines are also found in the precincts of the Śiva temple of Tirunelveli, in the Kanyākumārī temple at the southern tip of India, and in Rameshvaram and Chidambaram. Our loving Gaṇeśa is especially beloved in Maharashtra, where eight temples form one of His most sacred and popular pilgrimages, and dozens of other sites are designated for His adoration. It is said that to make a visit on hardship pilgrimage (third-class on trains, on foot or by crawling) to 108 Gaṇeśa temples and roadside shrines is most auspicious to smooth out the karmas of the future by dissolving, through His grace, the negative karmas and mistakes of the past, made knowingly or unknowingly. Penance of this sort deliberately condenses into a short period, or puts all in one place, the suffering that would otherwise be encountered over a long span of time.

The garden island of Sri Lanka has fourteen well-known Gaṇeśa temples. There is an unusual Vināyaka at the Śiva temple in Central Java, which is presently an archeological tourist site that was restored by the Indonesian government. Lord Gaṇeśa here sits with the soles of His feet pressed together, much like a child would sit, or as a yogī would sit in deep *samādhi*.

Archeological Discoveries

Sri H. Krishnamurthi writes in *Tattvāloka* (Feb.-March 1990): "Several images of Gaṇeśa have been discovered in the excavations of Central America and Mexico. It is said that in Mexico the name of Gaṇeśa is Virakośa." Decades back, India's Birla Science Institute announced a new find: "A piece of evidence was connected with the legend of Gaṇeśa's writing down the epic to the dictation of Vyāsa. A metal plate depicting the elephant-headed Deity holding

an etching stylus has been found in Luristan in Western Iran and has been dated to around 1200 bce *(Motilal Banarsidass Newsletter* Dec. 1993)."

In Malaysia and Elsewhere

Among the most renowned of Gaṇeśa's temples in Malaysia are the Siddhi Vināyagar temple of Petaling Jaya and the Kotta Malai Pillaiyar Temple of Kuala Lumpur on the busy street of Paduraya. The latter is a small temple, but extremely powerful, and among the most popular Gaṇeśa temples in the land. Also notable are the Jalan Pudu (Pasar Road) Pillaiyar Temple and the Poyyata Vināyagar Temple of Melaka. In Hawaii our Kadavul Hindu Temple for monastics and initiated members has a three-ton, six-foot-tall Gaṇeśa. At the Śaiva Dharmaśāla at Rivière du Rempart, Mauritius, we have dedicated a Spiritual Park and erected a grand *maṇḍapam* around a five-ton, nine-foot tall, five-faced *mūrti* of Gaṇeśa, Pañchamukha Gaṇapati at the convergence of the river and the sea. In Edmonton, Canada, New Zealand and Nandi, Fiji, Seattle, Salt Lake City, Bethesda, Denver, Scottsdale, Sebastian, Anchorage and Chicago there are exquisite stone *mūrtis* of the elephant-faced God, gifted by my aadheenam to the born Hindu communities, conferring blessings for new temples. In Great Britain, Gaṇeśa is enshrined at each of the nation's several new temples and is the presiding Deity at the Shree Gaṇapati Temple in Wimbledon. He is also enshrined at temples in Switzerland, Germany and Denmark. From my Kailāsa Pīṭham in Hawaii it has been my calling through the years to gift Gaṇeśa icons to begin the worship of Hindu community groups throughout the world.

Lord Gaṇeśa in America

The religion of the earliest known North American Indians bears many analogies to and apparently has sprung up from the same ultimate sources as our own venerable Sanātana Dharma, a fact that is evidenced by their rituals and religious beliefs and symbols. One of Lord Gaṇeśa's oldest symbols, the swastika, was one of the central motifs used in the designs and patterns of many American Indian tribes and is still seen today in their beautiful blankets and pottery. So the great God Gaṇeśa is not really new to the Western countries, but quite old. His recent coming into prominence is more our remembering Him in lands where He has always been. But it is in this twentieth century, in the decades of the '70s and '80s, that Lord Gaṇeśa has come to be traditionally enshrined in magnificent multi-million-dollar Hindu temples. We find Him in New York, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Concord, Livermore, Fremont, Denver, Houston, Nashville, Edmonton in Canada and hundreds of other places. These

shrines have brought forth the *mūrti,* or physical image, of Gaṇeśa as *Gajānana*, the Elephant-Faced. His strong footing now in all the major Hindu communities in the West is a great blessing and a joyous time for all. Gaṇeśa's presence in North America at the beginning of the growth of Āgamic Hinduism in the West ensures its success.

As Hinduism emerged in North America in the twentieth century, Gaṇeśa led the way. One of the first traditional temples to be built was the large Mahā Gaṇapati Temple in Flushing, New York. As each community sought guidance and direction in establishing religious roots, I constantly urged the trustees of each temple society, who came seeking guidance from Kauai's Hindu Monastery in the Hawaiian Island chain, to first begin their congregations in the worship of Gaṇeśa in order for their temple to come up quickly. We would often present the group with a large or small stone image of the great God and give them the blessings for His worship to begin. Thus, at many a new temple site, a Gaṇeśa image was established in a small shrine while construction and fund raising proceeded. This occurred in Fiji, Edmonton, Livermore, Fremont, Salt Lake City, Houston, Denver, Chicago, Lansing, Bethesda, London, Germany and elsewhere. Priests were brought from India, devotees flocked to the shrines, the worship began, and the funds to construct the temple began to flow. This practice has now become a tradition in the West as Hindus have learned from experience that once Lord Gaṇeśa is worshiped, it is actually He who builds the temple in a most wonderful and inspiring way, and they are His helpers.

Visions of Lord Gaṇeśa

Lord Gaṇeśa's vivified presence in the Western world has already culminated in many special visions of Him by both born and formally converted Hindus living in North and South America. In hopes of spiriting onward the worldwide fellowship of Hindus around the globe, a few such visions will be included here anonymously.

Lord Gaṇeśa has been worshiped here and there in North and South America in many small ways by devotees from India for many years since the turn of the century. But not until events in the early 1970s brought about the building of a large and very expensive Gaṇeśa temple in New York did Lord Gaṇeśa take up a formal public residence. The sequence of events leading up to this temple affirmed for our modern times the ancient tradition wherein the Deity Himself decides when and where His temple is to be built. It is not a man or a woman or a group of people who make that decision on the whim of personal inspiration.

Rather, the Deity, the God, informs us that the time has come for His temple to come up, and then we, in turn, proceed to help Him manifest it in the material world. The message from the God containing the direction of when and where to build His home is traditionally given by Him to holy men, gurus, swāmīs or *sants* who are respected by the community and are in personal touch with the Gods. Such religious leaders also have spiritual insight into the religious progress of the community. Lord Gaṇeśa may strengthen the instructions of such holy men through a dream or vision to a devotee.

The Mahā Gaṇapati Temple in Flushing, New York, began with two gentlemen from India who had been living in New York for several years. One of these hailed from a long line of temple builders; the other was a devout man who performed regular religious and yoga *sādhana*. This man had returned to India. He had a vision one night. He found himself soaring high above New York City until he came above an abandoned church in an area near his former residence. He came over the steeple, which opened as he moved down

to land in front of the altar. Lo! there on the altar was Lord Gaṇapati Himself, who said nothing to him but just smiled. Immediately upon awakening, with his heart filled with love and the vision of the Great God still fresh in his inner mind, this *sant* phoned the temple builder who was then serving at the United Nations in New York. The temple builder asked him to come to New York right away. Travel arrangements were made, and within 24 hours the two of them were driving around the Queens section of New York in search of Lord Gaṇapati's new home. They finally came upon the old Christian church that was the very one seen in the vision and which was for sale at the time! There could be no doubt that Lord Gaṇeśa had come and had shown where to put His temple. The building was subsequently purchased. After many years of hard work, with the blessings and sanction of Srilasri Pandrimalaiswami, Lord Gaṇeśa was installed and consecrated in an orthodox shrine to receive traditional public worship. That temple has expanded over the years.

Meanwhile, nearly halfway around the world on the Kona coast of the island of Hawaii in the Pacific Ocean, a small *mūrti* of Lord Gaṇeśa was being worshiped at a seashore shrine by my Śaiva Siddhānta devotees. A sixteen-year-old *kumārī* girl who lived nearby had been performing regular daily pūjā and chanting at the site. Her devotion was blessed with several visions of the Deities Gaṇeśa and Murugan. During April of 1980, at the time that new *mūrtis* of Lord Gaṇeśa and Lord Murugan were being delivered to their temporary residence at another devotee's home farther down the hillside, this young lady looked out from her home and saw the Lords Gaṇeśa and Murugan walking in a circle of blue light up toward the seashore shrine. She described them as completely bedecked with flowers, Gaṇeśa dressed in white and Murugan in orange. The Murugan *mūrti* was that of Palani, the renunciate, and this is how He appeared in the vision. She also reported having seen Lord Gaṇeśa on two other occasions sitting serenely at the site of His new shrine, gazing silently at her with doe-like eyes.

Just a few months later, another of my devotees in Hawaii, an older woman who had been doing *sādhana,* was sitting in meditation when her *satguru* appeared before her. He started to ascend upward in this vision, and she clutched his robes and went up with him until her strength failed and she fell back down. Before she landed, Lord Gaṇeśa caught her in His trunk and took her back up to where her *satguru* was seated in front of two large golden doors which opened into the world of the Gods. Lord Gaṇeśa gently set her down on the threshold next to her beloved guru, she said.

Since 1972 many other devotees have seen Lord Gaṇeśa in their visions and dreams. For example, several pilgrims on the 1981 India Odyssey, a spiritual pilgrimage to the holy lands of ancient Bharat (India), had life-altering visions of Lord Gaṇeśa at the Śrī Kumbalavalai Temple in Jaffna, Sri Lanka. Such visions of Lord Gaṇeśa clarify much about the way this great Lord works. While the visions took place within the subtle minds of His devotees, or our microcosm, this subtle space is in fact enormous and quite a macrocosm of its own.

Just as Lord Gaṇeśa's vehicle, the tiny rodent, ferrets out every secret space and hidden area of the house, so does this Great Mahādeva have the ability to move within the seemingly most obscure and intricate areas of our minds. He is the master of both the big and the small, the macrocosm and the microcosm. Lord Gaṇeśa's great girth is the entire manifestation of all that is, of the five elements: earth, air, fire, water and ether. Thus, He pervades all, not from the outside in but from the inside out. He does not move to pervade, for all form in its purest state is together, not far apart. Seated unmoving on the broad, four-petalled lotus of the *mūlādhāra* chakra, Lord Gaṇeśa records and governs the movements of vast inner oceans of *actinodic* energy that appear to our physical eyes to manifest as forms so many millions of miles apart. He is at work through all the outwardly gross forms of nature, and yet mounted on H is tiny mouse He can, in utter minuteness, travel about within His devotees' minds as if they were great, well-lit caverns. Such is the mystery of the pompous elephant-faced God, the embodiment of form who rides the mouse.

During pūjā at the Madhaya Kailāsa Temple in Chennai, devotees saw and continue to see Gaṇeśa, the elephant God, and Hanumān, the monkey God, merging into one, as the alpha and omega of existence. To honor this unusual form, in 1993 a five-metal image, half Gaṇeśa and half Hanumān, was created and enshrined. It all started with a series of early morning visions that graced devotees of the two unusual Gods in the great Hindu pantheon of 330 million.

The final vision to recite is one that I had in the mid-1980s of Lord Ganeśa walking from His temple attended by two priests. He was about to take a bath in the beautiful Indian Ocean in the country of Mauritius where the river meets the sea. I was standing in the water with several sharks swimming around me. Lord Gaṇeśa, accompanied by two priests, looked at me and said, "Just rub some oil on their noses and they will not harm you." This vivid mystic experience is illustrated on the next page.

Remember, such visions of this great Lord do not come only to the meditating yogīs, but to sincere *bhaktas* as well—those who by virtue of their *sukarma* receive this special grace at particularly auspicious times in their lives.

Our Loving Gaṇeśa

Loving Ganesha is our friend indeed.
He is our protector,
The God we go to when in need.

Loving Ganesha knows our future and past.
He is our conscience,
The God we go to when we want to move fast.

Loving Ganesha is the God on our side.
He is immediate,
The God we pray to when we want to abide.

Loving Ganesha is our loving Lord.
He is our All,
The God that we shall all look toward.

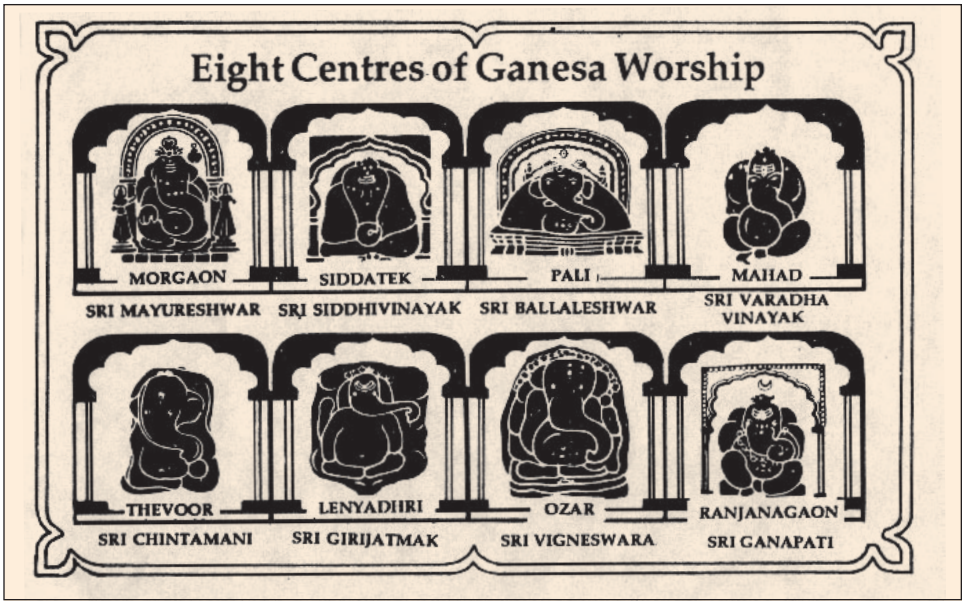
YOGENDRA
RASTOGI

The Favorite God of Maharashtra

By Dr. S. Srinivasan, from *Tattvāloka,* Feb/Mar 1990

No other state in India dotes on its presiding Deity the way Maharashtra does Lord Gaṇeśa. Every year the whole land reverberates with rhythm and music in praise of the Lord for ten days, starting with Gaṇeśa Chaturthī and culminating in a grand, pompous immersion ceremony on Ananta Chaturdaśi day. No wonder Maharashtrans cherish visiting the eight sacred temples of Vināyaka, known as the Ashṭavināyaka, where the Lord's image is said to have sprung up naturally, true to the word *svayambhū.* Logically, the images are devoid of elaborate ornamentation. They are stones showing only the broadest outlines of Lord Gaṇeśa's tusked face and trunk, heavily smeared with red *sindūr,* applied layer over layer for centuries.

Lord Gaṇeśa was brought decades ago to the heart of every Maharashtran



by Bal Gangadhara Tilak as part of a socio-cultural movement directed against alien rulers. The momentum it has gathered is now for all to see. Despite intrusion of modern tastes and living habits among the younger generation, the deep roots that Gaṇapati worship has struck in the ethos of this tradition-loving state appear well set to stay for eternity. The eight icons are located in scenic spots scattered over three or four districts of Western Maharashtra. In the good old days, with the transport system not so well developed, visiting all of them

took eight days or more; but today one can complete the pilgrimage in three days. There are travel agencies in Pune that arrange safe and comfortable trips for pilgrims. A brief resume of the shrines follows. Pilgrimage can be arranged through India embassies worldwide, each of which has access to efficient travel bureaus; and friendly help in arranging the pilgrimage will be gladly provided.

1. Morgaon Temple to Śri Mayūreśvara

Let us begin with the most important of the eight holy places, Morgaon, situated about 65km southeast of Pune and 16km from the nearest railway station, Jejuri. Enclosed by tall stone walls forming a quadrangle, the temple here bears some semblance to Islamic architecture characterized by minaret-like towers in the four corners. Apparently it enjoyed the support of a benevolent Muslim chieftain for awhile. An interesting feature of this temple is the giant-sized stone Nandi positioned in front of the Lord. It is said that centuries ago, as the Nandi was being transported to a Śiva temple nearby, it decided to settle in front of Lord Gaṇeśa and just would not move. Within the quadrangle surrounding the temple there are eight smaller temples with Gaṇapati idols by the names Ekadanta, Mahodhara, Gajānana, Lambodara, Vikaṭa, Naṭarāja, Dhūmravarṇa and Vakratuṇḍa. There are also twenty-three other idols of various Gods from the Hindu pantheon, besides two sacred trees: *bilva* and *shamī*. The sanctum sanctorum houses Mayūreśvara [Peacock Lord], a primordial idol with a left-sided trunk, fully smeared with saffron and protected by the hood of a cobra. It is said that the actual image is quite small but it looks big due to the thick layer of saffron, which falls off once in a century or so. The local people believe that this happened last in 1882 and prior to that in 1788.

2. Thevoor Temple to Śrī Chintāmaṇi

Situated 22 kilometers from Pune, this village became the spiritual retreat of many a Peshāwar ruler of Pune, especially Madhavarao the senior. Lord Gaṇeśa here is known as Chintāmaṇi [jewel of consciousness]. The story behind this name relates to the Lord's retrieving a precious stone *(chintāmaṇi)* for one of His devotees, Kapila Muni, from a greedy king, Gaṇa. By then, however, Kapila Muni would rather have his Lord than the precious stone. The Lord

thus chose to stay with His devotee as Chintāmaṇi himself. The conjoint river Mula-Mutha flows by the village as it winds its way to join Chandrabhāgā, which in turn flows past Pandharpur to eventually join the Tuṅgabhadrā and the Kṛishṇā. Morya Gosavi, the great Gaṇeśa devotee, used to pass through Thevoor on his trips between Chinchwad and Morgaon. The Lord's icon, again smeared with *sindūr,* is not much different from the others of the Ashṭavināyaka group, with the features hardly visible, except the elephant head and trunk. But the divine impact on the devotees is potent as ever.

3. Siddhatek Village Temple to Śrī Siddhi Vināyaka

This village is 13 kilometers northeast of Daund railway junction, but one has to cross the Bhima River by boat. Years ago, before a downstream dam was built, one could walk across the dry river bed; but today the waters are too deep. The idol of Gaṇeśa here is right-tusked. Devotees are enjoined to be extra careful about the rituals and austerity while worshiping a right-tusked Gaṇapati [Siddhi Vināyaka, Masterful Remover]. The temple complex is atop a hill which stretches over a kilometer on the other side. Devotees seeking a favor from the Lord go around the entire hill seven times in *pradakshiṇa*. With no footpath or road and with thorny bushes all around, this exercise—covering several kilometers of rough terrain—ought to bring the Lord's mercy to the seeker!

4. Ranjangaon Shrine to Śrī Gaṇapati

Located on the highway connecting Pune and Ahmednagar is the home of Śrī Mahāgaṇapati [Great Lord of Hosts]. Flanked by Buddhi and Siddhi, as His consorts are popularly known in Maharashtra, Śrī Mahā Gaṇapati of Ranjangaon can even enjoy the direct rays of the sun around noon time, thanks to the way the sanctum sanctorum is constructed. The icon of a ten-headed Gaṇapati known as Mahotkata is also housed in the temple complex but hidden from the view of most devotees. Some believe that once upon a time this was the main idol, but it was thereafter secretly hidden in fear of destruction by invaders.

5. Ojhar Kshetra to Śrī Vighneśvara

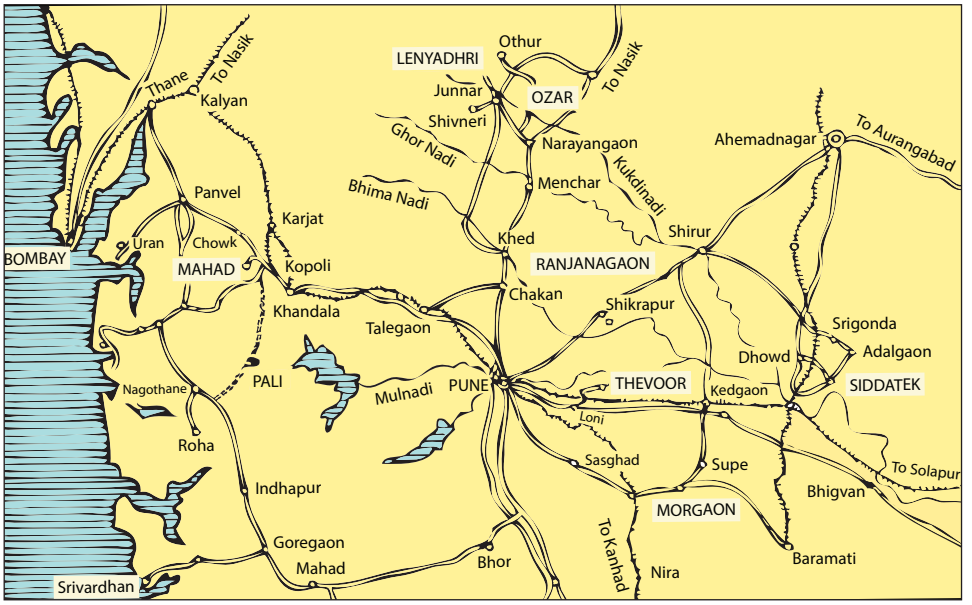
Just off the Pune-Nasik highway, this *kshetra* is ruled by Śrī Vighneśvara [Lord of Obstacles], again flanked by Buddhi and Siddhi. Two smart *dvārapālakas* (sentries), a wide two-tiered *prakāram,* a well-polished figure of a *mūshika* (mouse, the vehicle of Lord Gaṇeśa) and two giant *dīpastambhas* (lamp posts) all made of stone are the noteworthy features of this temple.

6. Lenyadhri Cave to Śrī Girijātmaja

The name indicates a cave in a mountain. Gaṇeśa as Śrī Girijātmaja, "mountain-born," enjoys a picturesque view of the landscape dotted with hills all around, merging into a mountain range beyond, and the Pushpavati River winding its way inbetween, glistening in the sunlight. After climbing 283 steps, one enters the temple, a single large room about 57 feet long and 51 feet wide, cut into the rock with no supporting pillars anywhere. There are 18 other caves, of Buddhist architecture, in this hill. This icon of Gaṇeśa has even less distinct features than the others. The locals believe that it is only the back of Gaṇeśa that is visible to the devotees and that the face is on the other side of the hill, which is unapproachable. Some Peshāwar rulers who tried to locate it were reportedly thwarted in their attempts.

7. Mahad Hamlet Temple to Śrī Varada Vināyaka

This is a tiny hamlet close to the Bombay-Pune highway near Khopoli, an industrial center. It is not to be confused with Mahad, a township on the way to Goa from Mumbai. The temple is located next to a tank that tends to go dry during summer, but the green fields and trees provide abundant cool air and a quiet atmosphere conducive to introspection and prayer. The sanctum is open to the public and, true to Maharashtran tradition, many devotees place their head right on the feet of the icon to seek blessings [of Varada Vināyaka, Lord of Boons]. An interesting feature of this temple is an *anantadīpa* (eternal flame) that has been kept alight since 1892.



8. Pali Temple to Śrī Ballaleśvara

About 8 kilometers off the Bombay-Goa highway, again set amidst a pleasant countryside dotted with hills and crisscrossed by rivers, one finds the village of Śrī Ballaleśvara. The name comes from Lord Gaṇeśa saving a boy named Ballala who even as a child spent all his time praying to Him. Angered by the boy's obsessive behavior, the villagers beat him mercilessly, and it was Lord Gaṇeśa who intervened to save his life. There are two Gaṇeśa temples here. One has first to visit Śrī Dhundivināyaka, the idol which Ballala worshiped, before proceeding to Śrī Ballaleśvara in the main temple. The idol in the latter is unusually broad and enjoys early-morning sun rays, as it sits facing the east, right at the foot of a steep hill. During the usually heavy monsoon months, waterfalls streak the landscape all around. A huge *pañchadhātu* (five-metal) bell adorns the temple. Its sweet chimes add a special touch of music to the various *āratīs* performed for the Lord.

Mahārāshṭra's Other Gaṇeśa Temples

In addition to the famous Ashṭavināyaka, Maharashtra boasts a bounty of Gaṇeśa temples in every nook and corner, some famous, others not so. The more important ones include Śrī Siddhi Vināyaka of Bombay; Śrī Mahā Gaṇapati (famous as a matrimonial matchmaker) at Titwala, 75 km from Bombay; Śrī Maṅgala Mūrti at Chinchwad, a suburb of Pune; Śrī Kasva Gaṇapati and Śrī Sarasbag Gaṇapati, both of Pune city. On the Arabian sea coast, just off Ratnagiri, Ganapatipule houses a temple that is literally kept washed by the waves every day, an attraction for tourists and devotees. Other well-known temples are Dasabhuja Gaṇapati near Chiplun on the coastal belt, Siddhi Vināyaka at Nandgaon, Vighnāyana Gaṇapati at Rakshasabhuvan in Marathwada, Modakeśvara at Nasik and Śrī Gaṇapati at Seetabardi, Nagpur. Pilgrims who visit all the named temples during a single tīrthayātrā, spiritual outing, are said to have gained the ultimate blessing of the five-armed Lord. Those rare souls who add to this list more visits to His other abodes are assuredly kept in His heart forever, enjoying the bliss of all sweet things when in the hereafter, between births.

A List of Gaṇeśa Temples Worldwide

Three great pillars have held Hinduism high, millenium after millenium: the *satgurus,* scriptures and the temples. Listed here are significant Gaṇeśa temples we know of around the world, with place name followed by temple name or the *mūrti* inside the temple. We welcome submissions to expand this list for future printings of *Loving Gaṇeśa.*

AUSTRALIA

ADELAIDE
Gaṇeśa

HOMEBUSH
Sri Karphaga Vinayaker

MELBOURNE
Vakratuṇḍa Vināyaka

BANGLADESH

DHAKA
Laksmi Bazar Ganesh

CAMBODIA

KANDALA
Padmāsana Gaṇeśa

CANADA

BRAMPTON
Sri Katpaga Vinayagar

CALGARY
Ganesha Temple

EDMONTON
Mahā Gaṇapati

LAVAL
Sree Mahaganapathy

SCARBOROUGH
Sri Varasiththi Vinaayagar Kovil

VANCOUVER
Sri Ganesh

DENMARK

HERNING
Sri Siddhi Vinayagar

FRANCE

GAGES-LES-GONESSE
Sundara Vinayaga

LA COURNEUVE
Sitti Vinayakar

PARIS
Sri Manika Vinayakar

RILLEUX-LA-PAPE
Vinayaga Perouman Koil

TROYES
Sri Sithi Vinayagar Alayam

GERMANY

BERLIN
Sri Ganesh

BREMIN
Sri Varasiththivinayakar

FRANKFURT AM MAIN
Karpaga Vinayagar

HAMM
Siddhi Vināyaka

HALTINGEN
Vara Siddhi Vināyaka

HEILBRONN
Vināyaka

JUCHEN
Sri Navashakti Vinayagar

MUNICH
Sri Sella PIllaiyar

NURENBERG
Sri Sithivinayagar

STUTTGART
Sri Sitti Vinayagar

GUYANA

HAGUE
Sita Ram Toolsie Vade Ganesh

ROSIGNOL
D'Edward Vighneshwar Mandir

INDIA

MAHARASHTRA, INDIA
The Eight-Temple Pilgrimage

MORGAON
Mayūreśvara (India's foremost Gaṇeśa pilgrimage)

SIDDITEK
Siddhi Vināyaka

PALI
Ballala Vināyaka

MADHTA
Varada Vināyaka

OJHAR
Vighneśvara

LENYADRI
Girijātmajā

RANJANGAON
Mahā Gaṇapati

THEUR
Chintāmaṇi

Other Maharashtran Sites

ADOSHA, NAGAPUR AREA
Śamī Vighneśa

BEROLA
Laksha Vināyaka

JETHA KAPAD MKT, BOMBAY
Siddhi Vināyaka

KALAMBA
Cintāmaṇi Gaṇeśa

KANAKESVARA
Rāma Siddha Vināyaka

KASVA
Jayate Gaṇeśa

NAGAJHARI RIVER
Triśuṇḍa

NAMALGAON
Amalāśramakshetra
(famous for prayers)

NANDED
Citrakūṭa Gaṇeśa

NASIK
Higalyaka Gaṇapati

PADMALAYA
Pravālakshetra
(with two Gaṇeśa murtis)

PRABHA DEVI, BOMBAY
Siddhi Vināyaka

RAJUR
Rājasadanakshetra

RAKSHASABHUVAN
Vijña Gaṇeśa

SANGLI, KRISHNA RIVER
Gaṇeśa (a svayambhū Gaṇeśa
installed over a Śivaliṅga)

TITWALA
Siddhi Vināyaka Mahā Gaṇapati
(a place of miracles)

UTTAR PRADESH, INDIA

PRAYAGA
Oṁkara Gaṇapati

VARANASI
Īhuṇḍhirāja Gaṇeśa

ORISSA, INDIA

CHANDIKHOLE, CUTTACK
Mahā Vināyaka

KERALA, INDIA

TIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Śrī Agrasala Gaṇapathy

TAMIL NADU, INDIA

AMBAL
Suddu Vināyaka

ANBILALANTURAI
Sevisaitta Pillaiyar

CHENNAI, PERIAMEDU
Śrī Varasiddhi Vināyaka

CHIDAMBARAM
Katpaka Vināyaka

KUDANTAI KIRKKODDAM
Gaṅgai Gaṇapati

KALATI
Mañjanti Vināyaka

KANCHIPURAM
Valampuri Vināyaka,
Vikada Chakra Vināyaka

MADURAI
Mukkuruni Pillaiyar Siddhi Vināyaka

MAYURAPURAM
Mayureśa Vināyaka

NAGAPADDINAM
Pañcha Mukha Vināyaka

PONDICHERRY
Manakkula Pillaiyar

SENPAKKAM
Temple of eleven
svayambhū Gaṇeśas

SIRGALI
Aapattukatta Vināyaka

TIRUCHIRAPPALLI
Uchi Pillaiyar

TIRUINNAMPAR
Nirutana Vināyaka

TIRUKKACHYUR
Tālamūla Vināyaka,
Karukkadi Vināyaka

TIRUKKADAVUR
Kallavarana Pillaiyar

TIRUKKARUVIL
Kadukkai Vināyaka

TIRUKODDAIYUR
Kodi Vināyaka

TIRUKOKARNAM
Mahā Gaṇapati

TIRUMAKARAL
Poyyā Vināyaka

TIRUMALAPADI
Sundara Gaṇapati

TIRUMARAIKADU
Veeragati Vināyaka

TIRUMURUGANPUNDI
Kūppidu Pillaiyar

TIRUNADDIYATANKUDI
Kaikaddi Vināyaka

TIRUNALLUR
Salakkirāma Vināyaka

TIRUNALLARU
Sorna Vināyaka

TIRUNARAIYUR
Polla Pillaiyar

TIRUNTUTEVANKUDI
Karkadaka Vināyaka

TIRUPATTUR
Maya Pillaiyar

TIRUPPANAIYUR
Tunaiyirunta Pillaiyar

TIRUPPURAMPAYAM
Piralayangkātta Pillaiyar

TIRUVAIYARU
Ādi Vināyaka

TIRUVALAM
Valam Vanda Vināyaka

TIRUVALAMSULI
Vellai Pillaiyar

TIRUVARUR
Vātāpi Vināyaka

TIRUVAVADUTURAI
Śivaprākasa Vināyaka

TIRUVETIKUDI
Veta Pillaiyar

TIRUVIDAIMARUTUR
Ānda Vināyaka

TIRUVILIMILALAI
Padikkāsu Vināyaka

TIRUVUSATANAM
Kutavana Pillaiyar

VALLAM
Varasiddhi Vināyaka

VIRUTTASALAM
Mattru Uraita Pillaiyar

INDONESIA

DAGO
Ganesh

JAKARTA
Mangala Vinayak

IRELAND

DUBLIN
Ireland Vinayaka

LETTERKENNY
Indian Community Centre

ITALY

GENOA
Sri Sithi Vinayagar Di Genova

PALERMO
Mauritius Ganesh Mandir
Sri Muttu Vinayaga Tempio

JAPAN

KAMAKURA
Hokai-ji

KUMAGAYA CITY
Menuma Shoden-zan

NARA
Ikoma Shoden

OSAKA
Kaishozan Shoenji

TOKYO
Matsuchiyama Shoden

KENYA

MOMBASA
Shree Siddhi Vinayak Ganpati

MALAYSIA

Kuala Lumpur Vicinity

JALAN BRUNEI/PASAR
Śrī Siddhi Vināyaka

JALAN IPOH
Śrī Paranjothi Vināyaka

KUALA KUBU BARU
Śrī Sithivināyaka

JALAN PPUDU LAMA
Śrī Gaṇeśan

Outside Kuala Lumpur

BEHRANG ULU, PERAK
Siddhi Vināyaka

IPOH
Śrī Mahā Gaṇapati

KLANG
Siddhi Vināyaka

SANDAKAN, SABAH
Siddhi Vināyaka

SITIAWAN, PERAK
Siddhi Vināyaka

MAURITIUS

BEAU BASSIN
Vinayak Mandir

BLACK RIVER
Marathi Paawan Ganesh Mandir

DUBREUIL
Marathi Shree Ganesh Mandir

FLACQ
Flacq Marathi Vighneshwar Mandali

GLEN PARK
Vighneshwar Mandir

HENRIETTA
Maratha Mandir

LA MARIE
Marathi Ganesh Mandir

MONT IDA
Shri Ganesh Mandir

MELROSE
Melrose Shri Gajanan Saraswati Mandir

NEW GROVE
Shree Ganesh Mandir New Grove

POINTE DES LASCARS
Parc Spirituel de Ganesh

ROSE HILL
Ganesh Kovil

TAMARIN
Marathi Ashta Vinayak Mandali

MYANMAR

MANDALAY
Sri Ganesh

PYIN OO LWIN
Ganesh

YANGON
Ganesh Hindu

NEPAL

Kathmandu Valley

BHAKTAPUR
Sūrya Vināyaka

BUNGAMATI
Karṇa Vināyaka

CHOBAR
Jal Vināyaka

KATHMANDU
Ashoka Vināyaka
Chandra Vināyaka

Outside Kathmandu Valley

GORKHA
Vijaya Gaṇapati

JANAKPUR
Rāma Temple
Siddha Gaṇeśa

PHULAHARA
Rāma/Jānakī Temple
Girijā Gaṇeśa

NETHERLANDS

DEN HELDER
Sri Varatharaja Selvavinayaga

NEW ZEALAND

PAPAKURA
Auckland Sri Ganesh

NORWAY

ALESUND
Alesund Hindu Kultur Senter

BERGEN
Sri Ananda Sithy Vinayagar
Bergen Hindu Sabha

TRONDHEIM
Sri Tiller Ganesha

SEYCHELLES

VICTORIA
Arulmigu Navasakti Vinayagar

SINGAPORE

CEYLON ROAD
Śrī Senpaga Vināyaka

KEONG SIAK ROAD
Śrī Vināyaka

SOUTH AFRICA

DURBAN, NATAL
Sithi Vinayaka

LADYSMITH, NATAL
Gaṇeśer

MT. EDGECOMBE, NATAL
Gaṇeśa

SRI LANKA

Jaffna Penninsula

CHULIPURAM
Kannaikothikakkai Pillaiyar

INUVIL
Karunakara Pillaiyar

MANIPAY
Maruthady Vināyagar

MURUKANDI
Murukandi Pillaiyar

NALLUR
Kailāsa Pillaiyar

NEERVELY
Arasakesari Pillaiyar

Outside Jaffna

ALAVEDDY
Kumbalavalai Pillaiyar

BATTICALOA
Mamaṅga Pillaiyar

COLOMBO, CHETTY STREET
Śri Muthu Vināyaga Temple

COLOMBO, BAMBALAPITIYA
New Kathiresan Temple

KANDY
Selva Vināyaka

KATIRAGAMA
Manikka Vināyaka

SURINAME

PARAMARIBO
Shri Ganesh Mandir

SWITZERLAND

BAAR
Arulmigu Sithi Vinayagar

BARAU
Sri Vinayagar

CHUR
Sri Navasakthi Vinayagar

PRILLY
Sri Pillayar Kovil

STEFFISBURG
Sri Varasithi Vinayagar

VERSOIX
Geneva Arputha Vinayagar

SWEDEN

FARSTA
Sri Sithi Vinayagar South Africa

PHOENIX, KWAZULU NATAL
Shree Ganesha

TAIWAN

TAIPEI
Sri Ganesh Mandir

THAILAND

BANGKOK
Central World Ganesha Shrine

CHIANG MAI
Ganesh HImal

CHACHOENGSAO
Khlong Khuean Ganesh
International Park

WAT SAMAN RATTANARAM GANESHA
Wat Phrong Akat Lord Ganesh

DANNOK
Ganesha

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

AVOCAT
Sri Siddhi Vinaayaaka Mandir

ESMERELDA
Ganesh Mandir

LA PASTORA SETTLEMENT
Ganesh

PENAL
Shri Ganesh Mandir

UGANDA

ENTEBBE
Shree Ganesh

UNITED KINGDOM

COVENTRY
Coventry Shri Sidhi Vinayagar

CROYDON
Shree Sakthy Ganapathy

HARROW
Shri Sithi Vinayagar Thevasthanam

ILFORD
Sri Selva Vinayagar

LIVERPOOL
Liverpool Ganesh

LONDON, EFFRA ROAD
Śrī Gaṇapati

PORT TALBOT
Shri Kalpaga Hindu
Culture Association

WALTHAMSTOW
Shri Katpaha Vinayagar

WIMBLEDON
Shree Ganapathy

UNITED STATES

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA
Śrī Gaṇeśa

BREA, CALIFORNIA
Shree Siddhivinayak

DORCESTER, MASSACHUSSETS
Ganesh Hindu

FLUSHING, NEW YORK
Śrī Mahā Vallabha Gaṇapati
Devasthanam

GLEN BURNIE, MARYLAND
Siddhivinaayak

MARICOPA, ARIZONA
Maha Ganapati

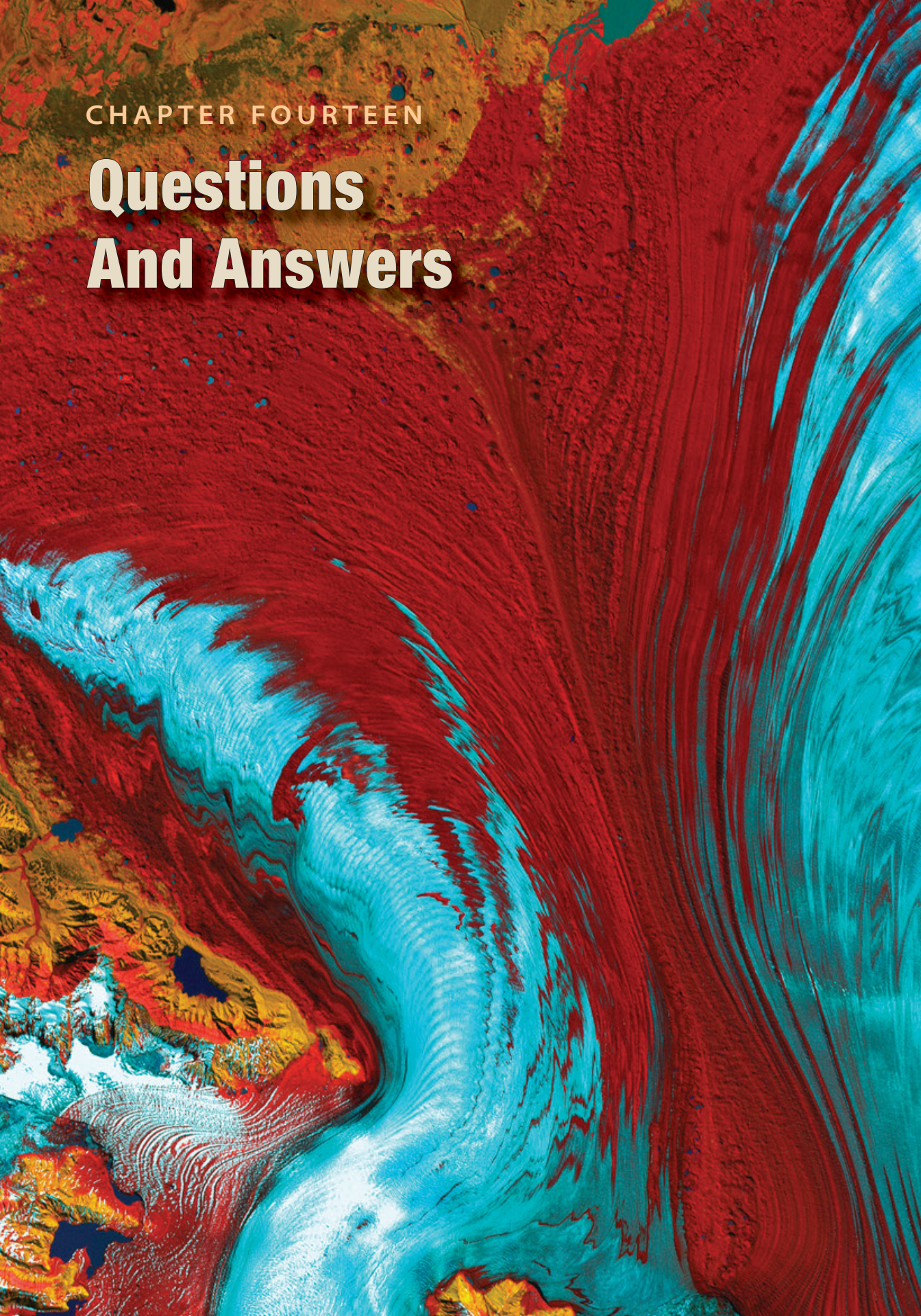
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE
Śrī Gaṇeśa

SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA
Sri Siddhi Vinayaka

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH
Śrī Gaṇeśa

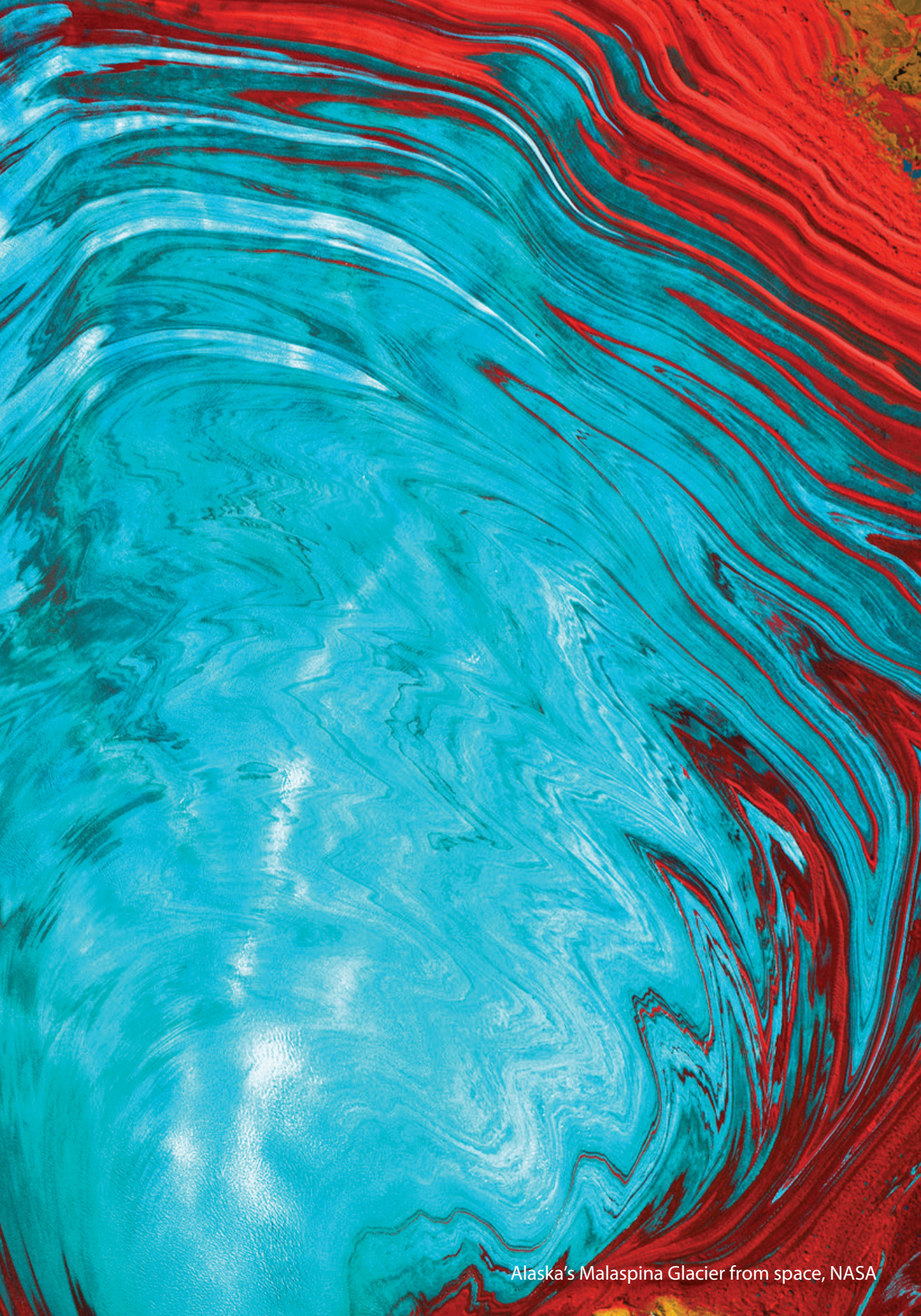
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON
Hindu Temple, Śrī Gaṇeśa

TOMS RIVER, NEW JERSEY
Shri Siddhivinayak



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Questions And Answers



Alaska's Malaspina Glacier from space, NASA

EXOTIC INDIA: KAILAS RAJ

Questions & Answers

Praśna Uttarī cha

प्रश्न उत्तरी च

OW IT MAY BE ENLIGHTENING IN OUR EXPLORATION OF THE WONderful being, Lord Gaṇeśa, to share with you answers to some of the questions most commonly asked about Him by the many inquirers worldwide. Hopefully these insights will inspire you to draw closer to Him and learn about His grace and His ever giving boons through your own experiences. Yes, Lord Gaṇapati is a mysterious God to most adults, but not to children. We, too, must be like little children to really enjoy and understand His majesty, mirth, wisdom and simple complexities. The God whose symbol is the swastika, who moves in many directions all at once, is truly, to a child, as simple as a digital on-and-off switch. Children who grow up in the ten arms of Him who has no second are quick and resilient of mind, amenable to change, not affected by wealth or poverty, adjustable and secure in His daily *darśana* before they worship other Lords of their choice.

Devotee: *What is the nature of Lord Gaṇeśa?*
Gurudeva: Lord Gaṇeśa is a Mahādeva, a Great God, created by Lord Śiva to assist souls in their evolution. He is the elephant-faced Patron of Art and Science, the Lord of Obstacles and Guardian of Dharma, the first son of Śiva. His will prevails as the force of righteousness, the embodiment of Śiva's karmic law in all three worlds.

My *satguru,* Sage Yogaswami, proclaimed: "The God with the elephant's face I shall never forget—Śaṅkara's Son, with massive belly and the ring in His ear, the Lord who gave His grace to Indra, of whom mantra is His very form." I often explain Lord Gaṇeśa in this way: "Lord Śiva, the Almighty Power, created heaven and earth and the God, Lord Gaṇeśa, to oversee the intricate karmas and dharmas within the heavens and all the earths. Lord Gaṇeśa was created as a governor and interplanetary, intergalactic Lord. His knowledge is infinite; His judgment is just. It is none other than Lord Gaṇeśa and His mighty band of *gaṇas* that gently help souls out of the Naraka abyss and adjust them into higher consciousness after due penance has been paid, guiding them on the right path toward dharmic destiny. He is intricate of mind, loving pomp, delighting in all things sweet and enjoying adulation. Lord Śiva decreed that this son be worshiped first, even before Himself. Verily, He is the Lord of Karma.

All Mahādevas, minor Gods, devas and sentient beings must worship Lord Gaṇeśa before any responsible act could hope to be successful. Those who do not are subject to their own barriers. Yea, worship of Him sets the pattern of one's destiny. Thus, this mighty ruler is truly a great God. The 2,200-year-old South Indian scripture *Tirumantiram* says, "Five-armed is He, elephant-faced, with tusks protruding, crescent-shaped, son of Śiva, wisdom's flower; in heart enshrined, His feet I praise."

Devotee: *What is Lord Gaṇeśa's special role?*
Gurudeva: He is Vigheśvara, Lord of Obstacles. As such, He controls our evolution by preventing or permitting events to happen in our life.

Lord Gaṇeśa holds the architect's plans of the divine masterpiece of universal past and future of this small world and all the galaxies. They were entrusted to Him when He took office by command of God Śiva. His rule is compassionate, His disciplines strong. He is equally feared and loved. His law is just, for justice is His mind. He enjoys adulation, festivity, hearing of His name, for this brings the devotee into His court, into His presence, close to Him. Only good comes from Lord Gaṇeśa, who by taking the form of an elephant distinguishes Himself from other Gods. He staves off misfortune for those who perform penance in His name. He is within us and not otherwise, closer than our heartbeat, guiding our karma through the timing of events. Our Lord of Obstacles prevents us from hurting ourselves through living under an incomplete concept or making a request unneeded or beginning an endeavor not well thought out. He expects us to use all of our intellectual and intuitive faculties and resources, to employ the knowledge available to us before submitting petitions to Him. It is for us to try to arrive at the right decision, the one that He Himself would have made in granting the acquisition. Thus, this Mahādeva, wise and all-powerful, truly is a great God. The ancient *Āgamas* declare, "These Lords who, it is said, on the pure path, attend to the various duties deriving from a higher realm of māyā are at the prow of the effects of the higher realm of māyā."

Devotee: *Why must we supplicate Lord Gaṇeśa before beginning any worship or task?*
Gurudeva: At the command of God Śiva Himself, we supplicate, that is, humbly request, Lord Gaṇeśa to clear obstacles from the path of our endeavor, if it be His will. As Lord of Obstacles, Gaṇeśa wields the noose and the goad, icons of His benevolent power of preventing or permitting events to happen in our life. Thus, we invoke His grace and wisdom before any worship or task.

My *satguru,* Sage Yogaswami, proclaimed: "May the Supreme Guru, who bestows on me His grace, be my protection! May the elephant-faced God be my protection! May the fair child who wields the shapely lance be my protection!" I have answered this question in this way: "The father and mother, in a properly conducted home, govern their children and prepare them to be fine citizens. The children ask permission from their parents before beginning any new endeavor. The employee asks permission from the employer before beginning any new endeavor. The subjects in a realm ask permission from the monarch before beginning any new endeavor. Why wonder we about asking permission from His Majesty, Lord Gaṇeśa, governor of this world, head, chieftain of our religion, before beginning any new endeavor? He of intricate mind and power is immediate and aware of any form of sincere prayer and supplication, humble requests to clear obstacles from the path of our endeavors, but only if that be His will. Thus, this loving God rules our lives, commanding acknowledgment and adulation—a truly great God is He.

Devotee: *What does it mean when an obstacle is encountered despite our sincere supplication of Lord Gaṇeśa?*
Gurudeva: It may mean that the time, the means or the goal itself is not right for our karma and dharma. The architect presents his finished plans to the engineer. They are rejected for one technical reason or another. The executive presents a completed letter to the president. It is rejected as not being explicit enough in the third paragraph. The architect and the executive were equally sincere in presenting their work. The engineer and the president were performing their duty as well. Lord Gaṇeśa loves us. He is a loving God who guides, governs and controls with speed and accuracy when the plan is perfect, deliberates long and rejects often when the plan needs revision. Take the plan back into your mind. Search your own superconsciousness for the greater ideas, and revise your efforts with confidence. Seek for the right timing, and proceed with confidence when you know the timing to be right. "When the will rises and commands, even the Gods are willing to obey," or to give immediate cooperation, to guide and enhance our efforts. We must work our minds in close cooperation with the mind of Lord Gaṇeśa, and then success is certain. Thus, this God is called Bhaktavighnavināsana, He who destroys the obstacles of the devotees.

If you worship the elephant-faced Vināyaka,
your life will expand bountifully.
If you worship the white-tusked Vināyaka,
your desires and doubts will flee.
Therefore, worship Him
with love offerings of jack, hoppers,
plantain and mango fruits
and thus mitigate the burden of deeds.

Saint Auvaiyar

O Elephant-Faced One!
You are so near and we are far from You.
You are in and we are out;
You are at home, while I'm a stranger.
Yet, You have destroyed my egoity.
I shall sing Your praise forever
and lay my garland of songs at Your feet.

Saint Nambiandiyadigal

He is worshiped with red flowers.
Unfailing, merciful, the origin of the worlds,
He appears at the beginning of creation,
alone, beyond Nature, beyond the Cosmic Person.
He who meditates on His form
becomes great among the yogīs.

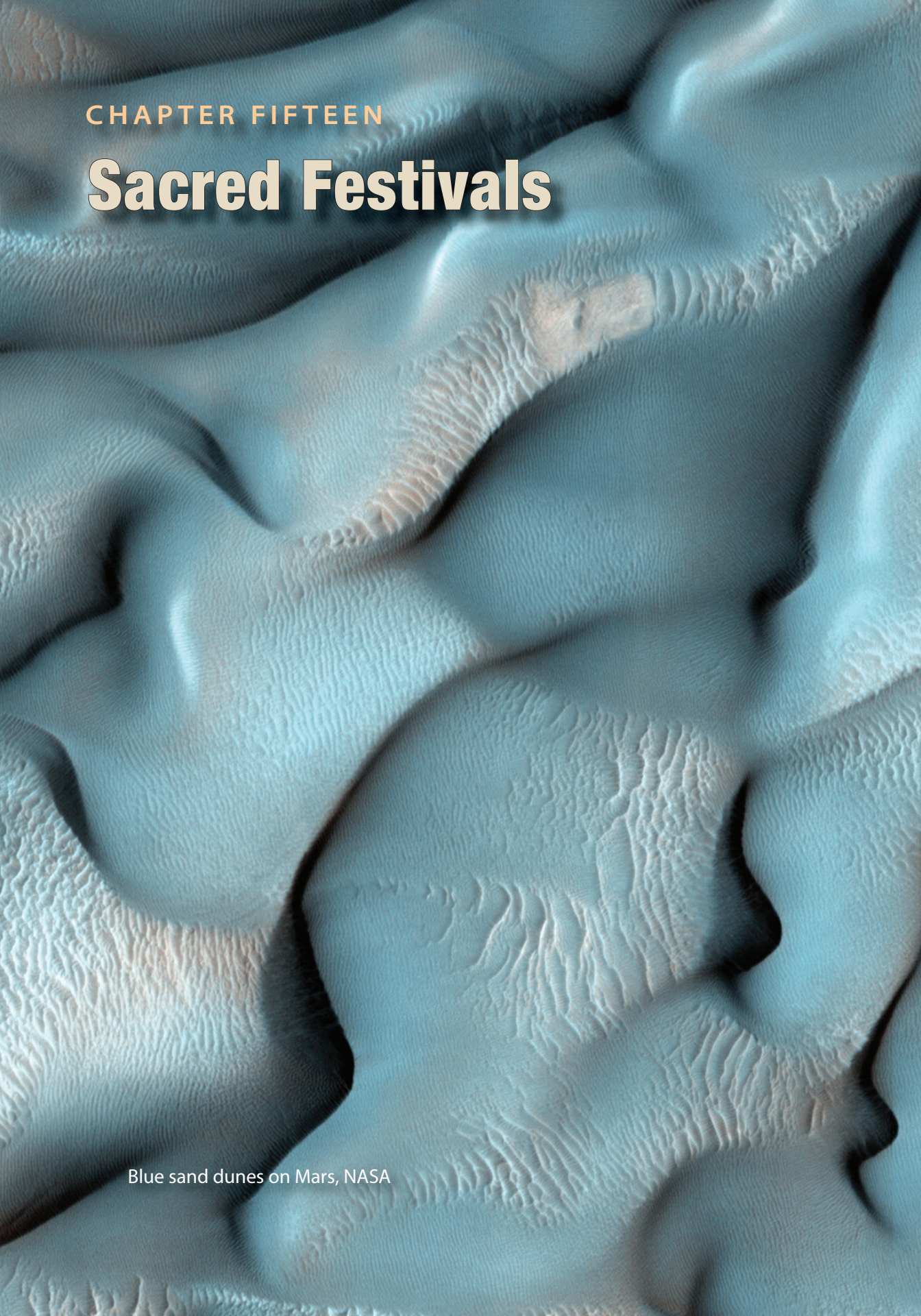
Gaṇapati Upanishad

Gaja, the elephant, is the origin and the goal.
The stage reached by the yogī in his
experience of *samādhi* is called *ga,* the "goal,"
and the principle called *ja,* the "origin,"
is that from which the syllable
of obeisance, Aum, is said to be issued.

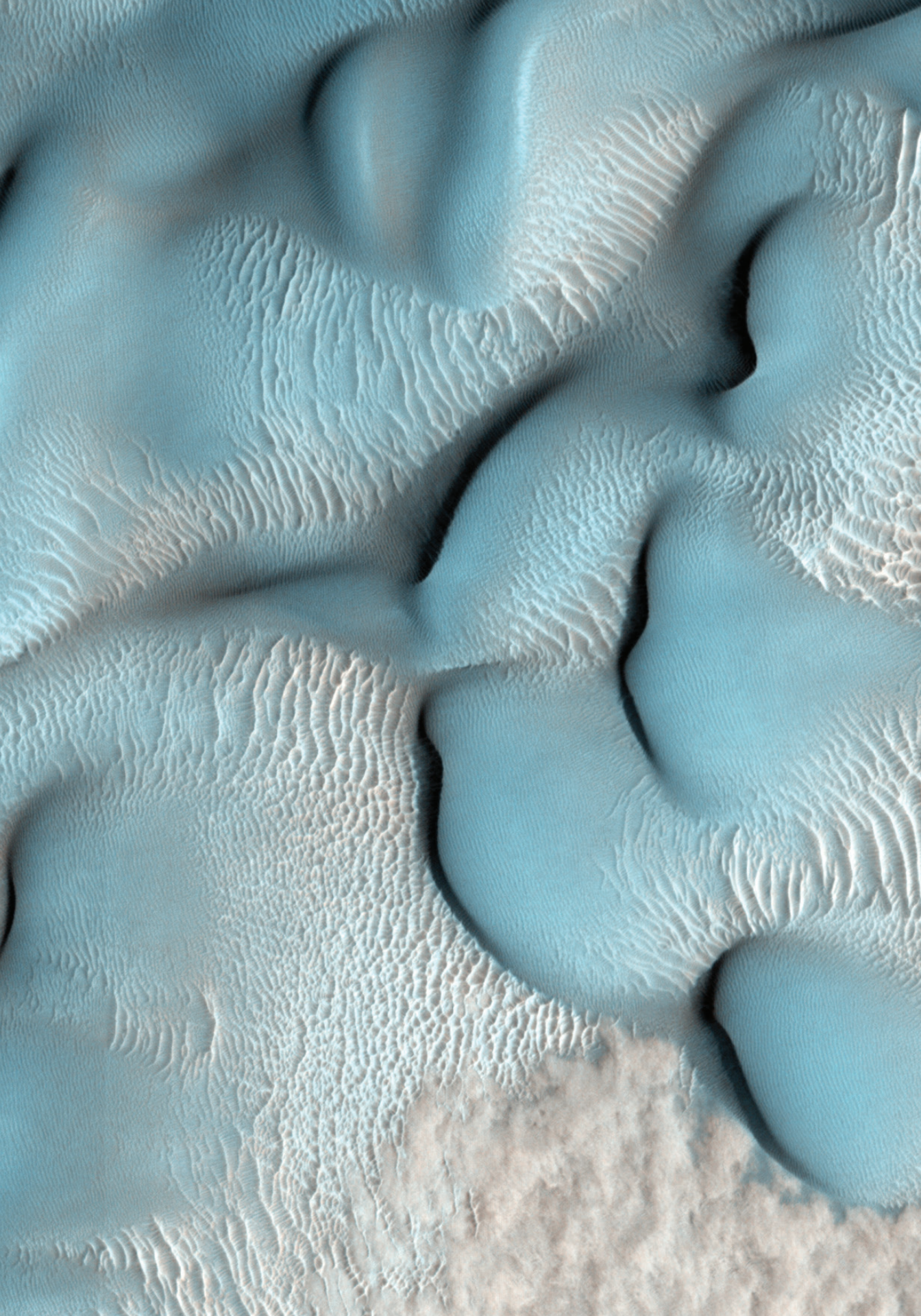
Brahmā Sūtras

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Sacred Festivals



Blue sand dunes on Mars, NASA



सिवारोनम॥ ॐ धैं ॐ गं भस्म भूजंगं गंग रुद्र कुंकुम माला मृग छा
चंद्र सिंगी सैब देस ही॥ ॐ धैं ॐ गं मुक केस भूषन ॐ ने
नेस गोदमैं गनेसै पूजै सुर सेरा पती म ही॥ संकर भवांनी
धुं नगपति ॐ नी। एह वेद बषानी को वुक वि मुति य्याक
॥ हे तैं जैगदीसै जगमा तै जगदीस के धाए क ॐ प्रोष ॐ नी
क ॐ जे बे ने य्युर ही॥ श्री भवानी सं क्रो ये नै म॥ श्री श्री

EXOTIC INDIA

Sacreð Festivals

Puṇyotsavāḥ

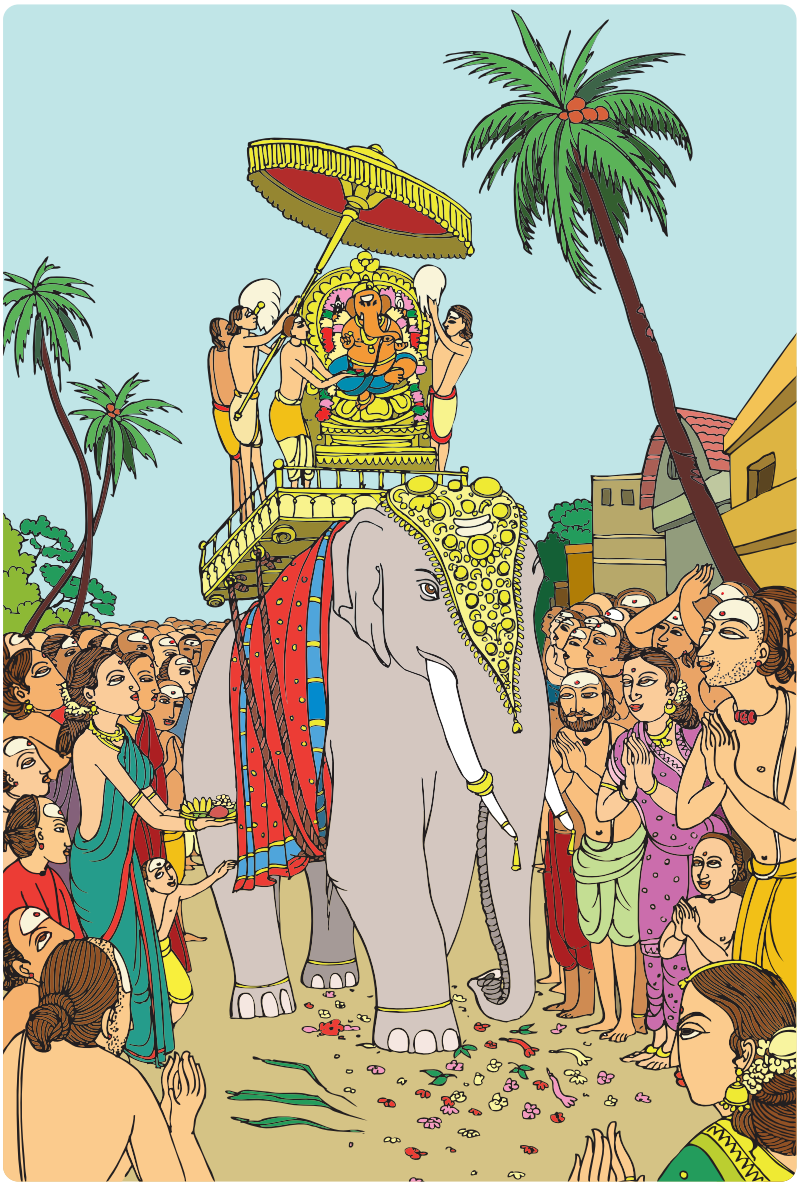
पुण्योत्सवाः

PULENT HINDU FESTIVALS ARE TIMES OF JOYOUS CELEBRATION MARKED by special observances. There are many festivals each year, several to each of the Gods. In this section we present the major festivals that honor Lord Gaṇeśa. Some are celebrated in the temple and others primarily in the home and village. Each of Hinduism's major denominations has its special festivals, and all share in certain celebrations. Each festival occurs at approximately the same time of year, varying slightly according to astrological calculations, usually based on the lunar calendar. Festivals are characterized by acts of piety—penance, fasting, pilgrimage—and spiritual rejoicing: singing, dancing, musical performance, parades, storytelling, scripture-reading and elaborate pūjās.

M. Arunachalam wrote in his *Festivals of Tamil Nadu:* "There are three aspects to every festival in the land. The first is the ritualistic aspect—the various steps of its celebration,…performance of a pūjā, preliminary arrangements, etc. The second is the legend aspect—the ancient stories which had grown 'round it.…The third is the philosophical or esoteric aspect which gives significance to the celebration and has kept it alive through so many centuries."

Gaṇeśa Chaturthī

Gaṇeśa Chaturthī, also known as Vināyaka Chaturthī, is the festival day celebrating the birth of Lord Gaṇeśa. One of the great national festivals of India, and the foremost annual festival to Gaṇeśa, it is celebrated on the *chaturthī,* or "fourth day," after the new moon in the Tamil month of Avani (August-September). We decorate the temple and home shrine with banana leaves, sugarcane and strings of mango leaves, making it look like a small forest. We bring baskets of fruits and sweets, especially modaka balls, and place them before the sanctum of Lord Gaṇeśa. He receives special pūjās throughout the day and often a festival parade. Each year we obtain or make a small or large soft clay image of Gaṇapati and use it for worship at home for two to ten days after Gaṇeśa Chaturthī. Pandit Arunachalam notes: "In Karnataka, India, young people make a ritual of seeing 108 Vināyakas on this occasion, so they go about visiting their friends' and relatives' houses on this day.…The worship



of Gaṇeśa on this day is supposed to confer advancement in learning to the young student and success in any enterprise undertaken" *(Festivals of Tamil Nadu,* p. 110-121).

Sri Arunachalam continues with a description of the Chaturthī Pūjā itself: "The worship, or pūjā, is done as usual towards the close of the forenoon. The whole house and the entrance are decorated with *kolam.* Festoons are hung

'round the place of worship, making it into a sort of decorated *maṇḍapam,* or hall. Tender coconut leaves, split and artistically designed, white in color, mango leaves dark green, lilies in white, and pink and crimson festoons present a colorful appearance. The newly made clay image is placed facing east in a convenient place in the northern part of the house on a pedestal decorated in *kolam* design of an eight-petalled *padma* (lotus flower). On the *padma* a small quantity of paddy (uncooked rice) is spread, and the Gaṇeśa image is placed on it over a plantain leaf. Only white flowers are used for the worship. *Aruhu* and *erukku* are special favorites. Then all the pūjā rituals are gone through fully.

"Besides, the fruits of the season, such as the wood apple and *jambu* (naval) [*Syzgium cumini*], are also offered in plenty along with the customary plantain fruits and coconuts.… Usually in the rural parts, a pūjā is performed again the next morning or noon *(punarpūjā)* with fresh food offerings. In the evening, the Gaṇeśa image is carried by the boys, along with the flowers, and consigned to a running stream or to a good water pool or tank. So, Gaṇeśa who was shaped out of the earth, is now returned to the same earth." This is a day for rejoicing and for seeking the blessings of the Lord of Obstacles to bring wealth and success into our life.

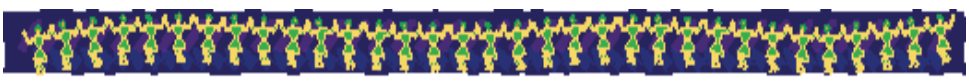
Gaṇeśa Visarjana

Gaṇeśa Visarjana (a Sanskṛit word meaning "departure") names the Gaṇeśa Chaturthī immersion ceremony. Especially in Maharashtra state, it takes place ten days after Gaṇeśa Chaturthī; though in some areas Visarjana is done even on the Chaturthī day itself. It is a ceremony of fond farewell to a beloved God. On Chaturthī day we celebrate Gaṇeśa's birthday and then honor Him as our beloved guest for ten days. Then on the tenth day, called *chaturdaśi,* we bid Him fond farewell at the ocean shore or banks of a river or babbling brook of love and watch Him float off on the conveyance we have prepared for Him until He finally disappears from sight into the waters. We honor His departure with a grand parade, as we carry Him on a palanquin bedecked with flowers and accompanied by pūjā, music, dancing and celebration. Clay images of Gaṇeśa specifically prepared for the event are ceremoniously dissolved in the ocean or other body of water at this time by devotees all over the world, signifying Gaṇeśa's withdrawal into all-pervasive consciousness. Though the Visarjana has been celebrated as a religious festival for thousands of years, it became especially popular early in the 20th century.

Sri S.K. Deodhar explained the popularity of the Visarjana festival in HINDUISM TODAY, July, 1988: "Lokmanya Tilak from Maharashtra, who first raised the banner for Indian independence and freedom from British rule, gave the call around 1910 to celebrate the Gaṇeśa festival as a public pūjā, so as to mobilize people to come together to build up a strong, united India, based on her holy traditions and scriptural teachings. Since then, people observe the festival, both at home and in public, with options of one and one-half days to five, seven or ten days. The tenth day is Ananta Chaturdaśi, which coincides with the pūjā to Ananta, the Holy Serpent.

"The tenth-day immersion procession is truly spectacular in many cities, when thousands of idols are taken to the sea or river with a lot of music, dance, rejoicing, street chariots and decorations. These continue often throughout the tenth night, up to the eleventh day morning. The celebration consists of bringing an earthen idol from the market and doing pūjā in the traditional style as you would do for a respected guest who comes to your home. When it is time for a guest to depart, we offer him gifts and food for his travel. Then we accompany him up to the border of the village, which is often a small stream or rivulet. As the guest enters the water of the stream, we bid him goodbye and return home. This old tradition is observed in the Gaṇeśa festival, by immersing the earthen idol in the river, sea or tank. The observance was originally for one and one-half days: bringing the idol on the first day, doing the pūjā, rejoicing, and immersing it on the second day. But later many people increased the period to celebrate the festival with more joy, devotion, music, religious talks, etc. The Indian state of Maharashtra is renowned for its Visarjana festivals, which each year draw millions of participants, most notably in the cities of Bombay and Pune." (Sri Deodhar's description was translated from Gujarati by Sri Vinayak Vishwanath Gokhale.)

It is well known that Lord Gaṇeśa has a knack for bringing devotees together, and the Visarjana is one of the ways that He does this. All forget their daily concerns, worries and personal lives during this celebration and gather with others in the fun. In 1988 Gaṇeśa broke new ground in his public relations when Visarjana was held in the United States. It was the first large-scale interdenominational public Hindu festival held in US history. It was indeed an historic event. Almost two thousand Hindus gathered in San Francisco, California, on September 25 for a grand festival culminating ten days of worship and festivities begun on Gaṇeśa Chaturthī. More than twenty Hindu organizations of various traditions participated against the majestic backdrop of the Golden Gate Bridge. Horns sounded, drums played and bells rang out pūjās



as hundreds of images of Gaṇeśa were dramatically conveyed to the Pacific Ocean. Many worshipers stated with delight that they felt as if they were back in India. The celebration proved to one and all that Hinduism had reached a new level of maturity in the US, as devotees boldly proclaimed their faith in such a grand public ceremony. The festival has been held in the San Francisco Bay Area every year since its inception. Australia followed suit a few years later, and now yearly parades are held on the streets of Sidney by all Hindu groups joining together in public worship.

Making Clay Gaṇeśas

Pandit Arunachalam provides an excellent description of the joyful activity of making clay Gaṇeśas: "The form of Gaṇeśa is a delight not only to the artist and the sculptor but also to the children.…Almost all the children try their hand at producing the complete form of Gaṇeśa in clay with their own hands—the full elephant face with its trunk curved at the tip, four hands, the uplifted ones carrying the goad and the noose, the left hand carrying the *modaka,* the right in the pose of offering benediction, the big belly with the sacred thread thrown across the left shoulder, the two stumpy legs, and not omitting His mount, the little shrew [mouse]. The scarlet black-eyed seeds of the creeper kunrimani (the crab's eye, *Abrus precatorius*) serve as the eyes of Gaṇeśa. In places like Madras, a slender paper umbrella is added.

"The clay image is made at the moment in the morning. In urban areas, people purchase it. But in the rural parts it is the pride of the urchins to make the image each for the family worship. The boys vie with one another in making the image perfect, i.e., in making it conform to what is known as the Ravi Varma picture as closely as possible. Rules lay down that the image is made out of the mud of the ants' hill. In urban areas, hand-made supply cannot keep up with the demand. So the makers have wooden moulds on which they hand-press the kneaded clay and cast the images."

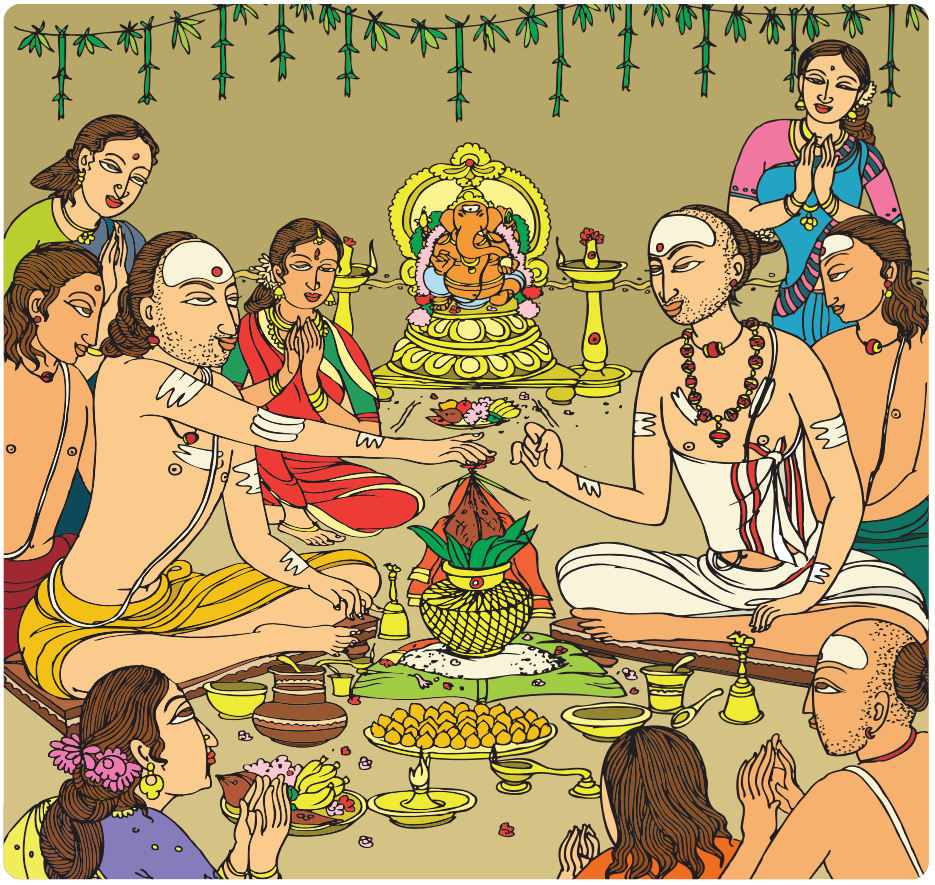
THE PROPER ATTITUDE

Making an image of the God must be done in the right spirit. Swami Satyananda Saraswati of Devi Mandir in California contributes the following instruction.

"Take all of the love in your heart, all the longing to see God face to face, the totality of your aspiration for Self Realization, mix it with straw and earth and watch as the divine image takes shape within your very proximity.

"Give form to your longing, that heartfelt desire to know the Divine immediately and directly, to experience the divine presence in intimate contemplation, and see how all the elements—earth, water, fire and air—unite from the infinite expanse of nature in order to form an image of Divinity, the reflection of God. Remember the difference between trying to make a statue and praying for the *mūrti* of God to manifest through us. Meditate upon the various attributes, and put your mind into the fullness of *bhāva,* the attitude of the Deity.

"Let all the peace, all the light, all the goodness which the Deity inspires become part and parcel of your being. Inwardly worship the Deity, reciting the mantras and contemplating His subtle form. Smile at that internal *mūrti* and with the utmost sincerity request permission from God to make that divine form manifest in a manner all can perceive. When the image takes form, find all the love and devotion you can offer and breathe the soul of life into your image of God, praying for the blessings of wisdom and peace for all."



A SIMPLE METHOD FOR A WOOD-BASED GAṆEŚA

By Sri Sateesh N. Apte M.D., Danville, California

The materials needed for a wood-based clay Ganeśa are: 1) clay (either professional sculptor's clay or that gathered from a river bed) or *papier maché;* 2) latex or other water-based paint in yellow, red, black and flesh colors; 3) gold-leaf paint, 4) aluminum foil, 5) paint brushes, 6) sandpaper, 7) putty or joint compound, 8) miscellaneous ornaments and cloth for dressing the *mūrti.* 9) wood for the base structure or armature on which the clay is moulded.

INSTRUCTIONS

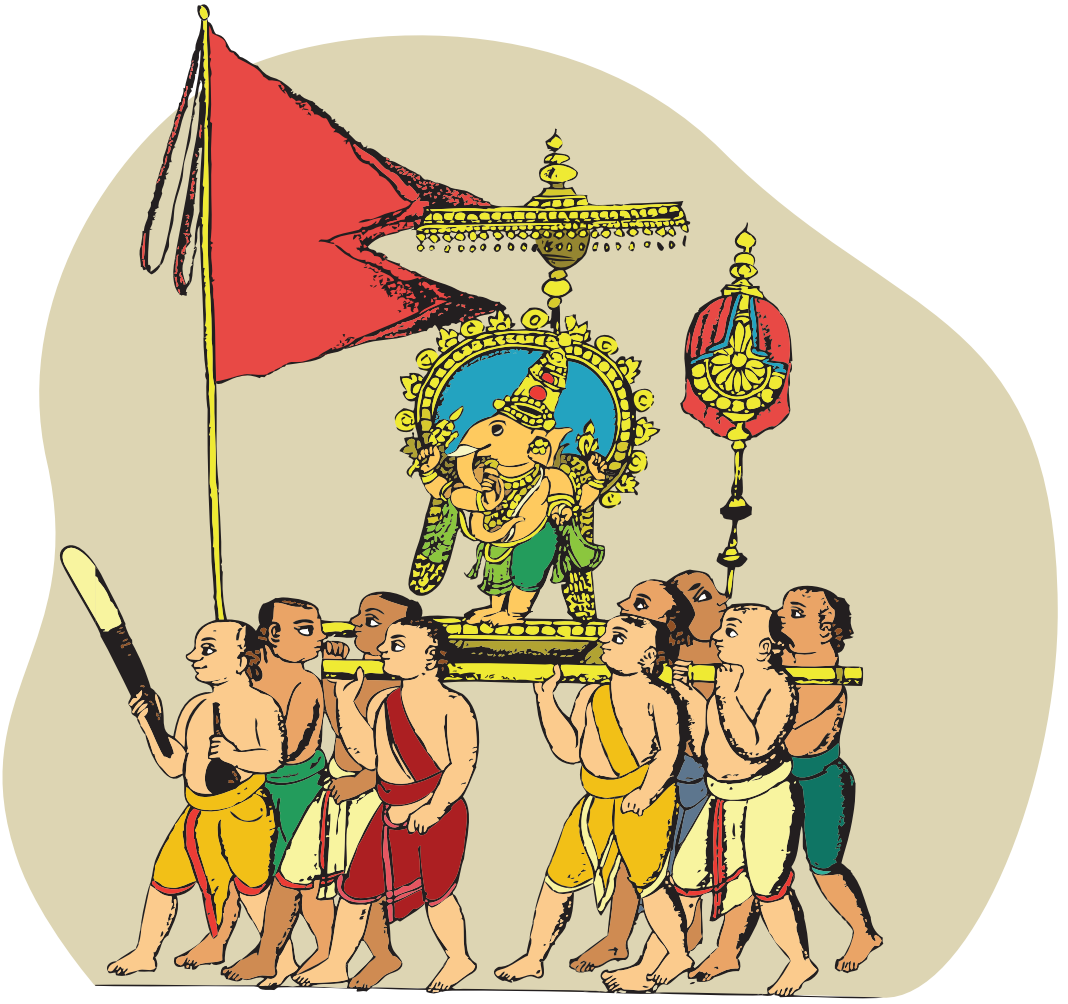
1. Mix clay or *papier maché* to a firm but homogeneously wet consistency.
2. Make an armature (skeleton) of wood, styrofoam or similar material.
3. Create the image by covering the armature with clay and sculpting His form.
4. Brush the exterior smooth with a wet brush.
5. Let the image dry in a cool place, away from the sunlight. (Drying time is usually one month for every foot in height for a clay image, three weeks for *papier maché.*)
6. When dry, sand with coarse, then fine sandpaper.
7. Fill cracks with putty or joint compound. Sand again.
8. Apply a white primer and sand with fine sandpaper.
9. Make the image dust-free.
10. Paint the torso, head, trunk and limbs in flesh color.
11. Place appropriate dress (traditionally white or red silk) upon the image.
12. Paint the crown gold and the hair and eyes black.
13. Draw three stripes of *vibhūti* on the forehead and a swastika and an Aum on the abdomen with red paint and a fine brush.
14. Make implements for each hand out of aluminum foil.
15. Decorate the image with ornaments, flowers, etc.

Vināyaka Vratam

Vināyaka Vratam is a 21-day festival honoring Lord Gaṇeśa beginning on the full moon day in the month of Kārttikai—November/December. During these days, Vināyaka Purāṇa, or stories, are recited in the temples, and special pūjās are conducted at every Gaṇeśa temple. Many devotees observe the *vrata* (vow) of attending daily pūjā at a Gaṇeśa temple and taking only one meal a day, in the evening.

Mārkali Pillaiyar

Mārkali Pillaiyar is a month-long home religious festival held in honor of Lord Gaṇeśa. For untold thousands of years winter festivities and ceremonies have been held in His honor. During the Tamil month of Mārkali—from mid-December to the mid-January—we worship Lord Pillaiyar, the Noble Child, with special devotion, prayers and japa of His names. This month is the most spiritual time of the year, and we meditate diligently, especially between four and six in the morning. Traditionally, all worship, prayer and spiritual disciplines, or *sādhana*s, are commenced during the month of Mārkali, and the home is cleaned each day.



Pañcha Gaṇapati

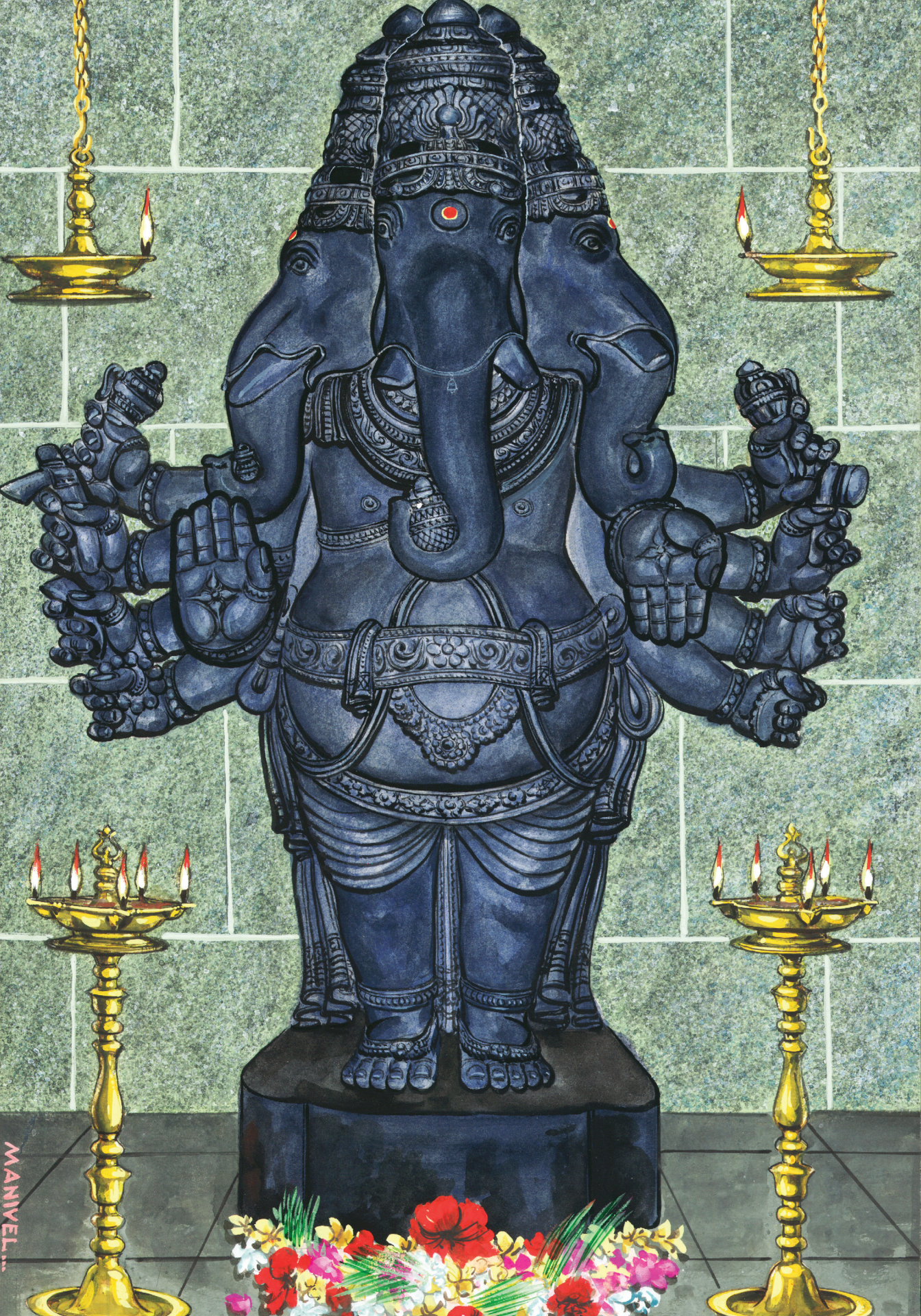
Pañcha Gaṇapati is a modern Hindu festival of the Five-Faced (*pañcha* means "five") Mahā Gaṇapati—Lord of Categories. This festival falls during the thirty days of the Mārkali Pillaiyar home festival and lasts for five days—from December 21 through 25.

The winter solstice has always been a festive time of year in all countries and religions, among Hindus especially, for it is a traditional season for the worship of Lord Gaṇeśa. In Hindu Vedic astrology this time of year marks the end of the sun's southward movement and the beginning of its movement north, the change from *dakshiṇāyana* to *uttarāyana*. Since Hindus do not celebrate Christmas, they may find it difficult to relate in a meaningful way to those who do. Their children are often embarrassed when asked why they do not receive gifts on December 25. Adults feel the need to give gifts and mail greeting cards as well as receive them from their relatives, neighbors, friends and business associates. Pañcha Gaṇapati is a Hindu expression of this natural season of worship, gift-giving and celebration.

December 25 and the days that precede and follow it have truly become a special time of year for people of many religions, and for the non-religious as well. In fact, this season has become so universally popular that it has virtually become a secular cultural holiday in addition to its special observance by certain religions. Recognizing this fact, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled Christmas a secular, social holiday. This is because it has become a time for everyone to rejoice, give and share their abundance, each in his own way.

CREATING THE PAÑCHA GAṆAPATI SHRINE

Pañcha Gaṇapati is not a temple *utsava;* it is a contemporary home observance. Because of the importance of this festival as a new beginning and mending of all mistakes of the past, a festive shrine is created especially for the five-day event in the main living room of the home. At the center of the shrine is placed a large wooden or bronze five-faced statue of Lord Pañcha Gaṇapati. If this is not available, any large picture of Lord Gaṇeśa will do. The home shrine is decorated in the spirit of this festive season. Lord Gaṇeśa is often depicted as coming from the forest; therefore, pine boughs (or banana leaves) may be used. *Dūrvā* grass, sugarcane and garlands of sweet *modaka* balls are used to decorate the home shrine. Flashing lights, tinsel and colorful hanging ornaments may also be added.

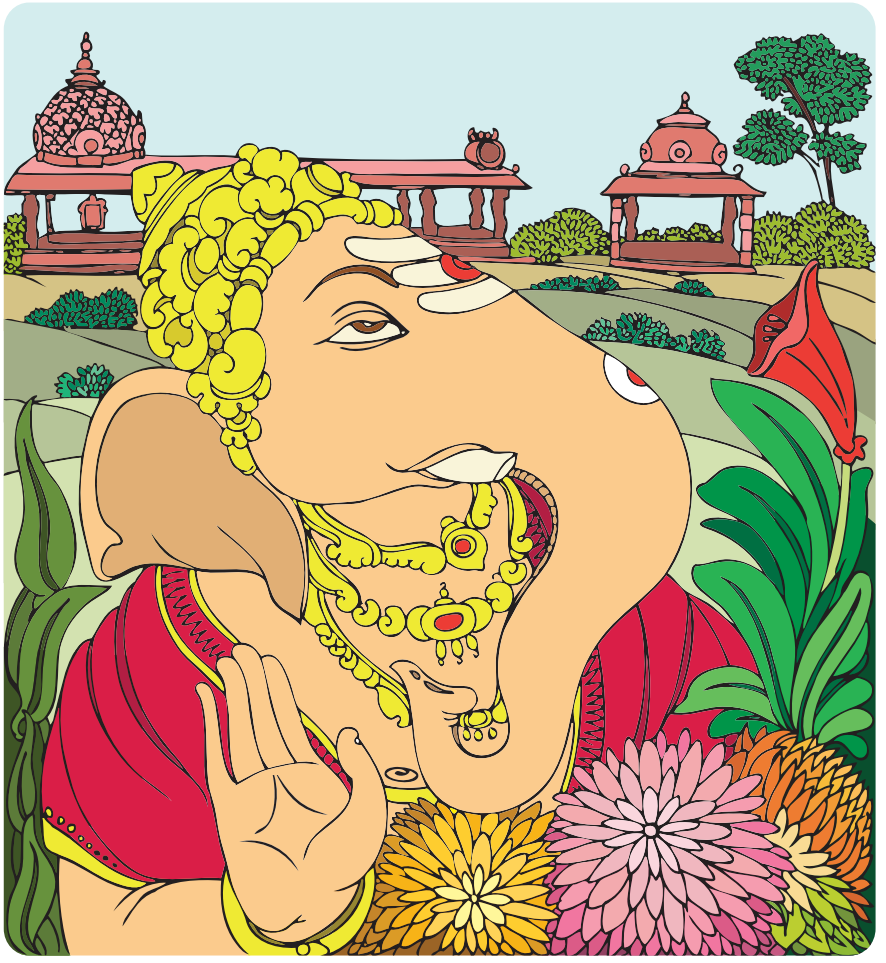

MANIVEL

Pañcha Gaṇapati is dressed anew each morning, preferably by the children, in a special color for that particular day. His five śaktis are loved and adored by all members of the family. He appears in golden yellow on December 21. A regal gown of royal blue is presented to Him on December 22 and one of ruby red on the 23rd. On December 24 He appears in emerald green; and on the final day Lord Pañcha Gaṇapati comes forth in brilliant orange to bless all who visit Him, bestowing 365 days of wealth and abundance until returning again next year in the form of Pañcha Gaṇapati.

Pañcha Gaṇapati should be celebrated in a distinctly Hindu way. The items which should not be used are Christmas trees, Santa Claus or symbols of other religions. These symbols carry connotations that are to be avoided in Hindu worship. Season's greeting cards should be Hindu in design and content. Season's greetings to friends in other religions can continue with thoughts of Hindu wisdom or quotes from Hindu scripture. If properly chosen, they will be appreciated and cherished.

PAÑCHA GAṆAPATI ACTIVITIES

Pañcha Gaṇapati is a joyous time for the family and should include outings, picnics, holiday feasts and exchange of cards and gifts with relatives, friends and business associates. Each day a traditional offering tray of sweets, fruits



and incense is offered to Pañcha Gaṇapati, often prepared and presented by the children. Each day gifts are given to the children, who place them unopened before Pañcha Gaṇapati, to open only on the fifth day. After each pūjā, the sweets are given to them from the offering tray as *prasāda.* Gifts need not be extravagent or expensive; they should be within the means of each family. Handmade presents are by far the most precious. Gaṇeśa does not want gift-giving to promote Western commercialism but to further the great Hindu culture. Clearly, killer games should never be given. Greeting cards, ideally made by the children, offer Hindu art and wisdom, such as verses from the *Vedas*.

During each of the five days of Pañcha Gaṇapati, chants, songs, hymns and *bhajanas* are sung in His praise. Each day a different family *sādhana* is focused upon. The first *sādhana* begins the morning of December 21, and the others begin each day thereafter until the fifth and final day, December 25.

DECEMBER 21, YELLOW

The family *sādhana* for the first day of Pañcha Gaṇapati is to create a vibration of love and harmony among immediate family members. The day begins early, and the entire family works together to design and decorate the shrine with traditional symbols, *raṅgoli,* lamps and more. Then a grand pūjā is performed invoking the spirit of Pañcha Gaṇapati in the home. The *sādhana* of the day now begins. The family sits together for the purpose of easing any strained relationships that have arisen during the year. They make amends one with another for misdeeds performed, insults given, mental pain and injuries caused and suffered. When forgiveness is offered to all by one and all, they speak of each other's good qualities and resolve that in the days ahead they will remember the futility of trying to change others and the practicality of changing oneself to be the silent example for all to witness. Gifts are then exchanged and placed unopened before Pañcha Gaṇapati. As family harmony is important to all Hindus, this *sādhana* must be taken very seriously.

DECEMBER 22, BLUE

The family *sādhana* for the second day of Pañcha Gaṇapati is to create a vibration of love and harmony among neighbors, relatives and close friends and presenting them with heartfelt gifts. The sadhana of the day is to offer apologies and clear up any misunderstandings that exist. Relatives and friends in far-off places are written to or called, forgiveness is sought, apologies made and tensions released. Gifts received are placed unopened before Pancha Ganapati.

DECEMBER 23, RED

The family *sādhana* for the third day is to create a vibration of love and harmony among business associates, the casual merchant and the public at large. This is the day for presenting gifts to merchants and customers and to honor employers and employees with gifts and appreciation. The *sādhana* today is the settling of all debts and disputes. Gifts received are placed unopened before the Deity.

DECEMBER 24, GREEN

The *sādhana* of day four is to draw forth the vibration of joy and harmony that comes from music, art, drama and the dance. Family, relatives and friends gather for *satsaṅga* to share and enjoy their artistic gifts. When the program is over, all sit together before Pañcha Gaṇapati, Patron of the Arts and Guardian

of Culture, discussing Hindu Dharma and making plans to bring more cultural refinements into each household. More gifts are placed before Lord Gaṇapati.

DECEMBER 25, ORANGE

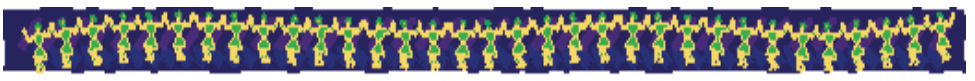
The family *sādhana* for the final day of Pañcha Gaṇapati is to bring forth love and harmony within all three worlds. Because of *sādhanas* well performed during the first four days, the family is now more open and aware of Gaṇeśa's grace, and their love for Him is now overflowing. On this day the entire family experiences an outpouring of love and tranquility from the great God Himself. His blessings fill the home and the hearts of everyone within it, inspiring them anew for the coming year. This exchange of affection between all members of the family and the Lord is invoked and perpetuated through the day by performing five special pūjās. The first pūjā is at 6am. Before the pūjā, personal offering trays are prepared and placed before His shrine. After the pūjā, each one gives verbal testimony about prayers that were answered during the past year. Hearing testimonies strengthens the faith of everyone. Then vows of sacrifice can be verbally made. Vows should improve the quality of the life of the individual, such as giving up smoking or correcting other harmful habits.

The second pūjā is at 9am, and the third at 12 noon. The fourth pūjā is held at 3pm. At 6pm the fifth and final pūjā of the day is held. These five pūjās to Pañcha Gaṇapati solicit help from His devas in the home and establish the patterns for improvement in family life. The overflowing love that is felt today will inspire generosity in the year to come, bringing in return abundance and good fortune. All gifts received during the day are placed unopened before Pañcha Gaṇapati.

The evening pūjā, held at six o'clock, is the long-awaited time. The five *sādhanas* have been completed. Peace, love and harmony among everyone have been restored. After the pūjā and before the great feast that follows, Lord Pañchamukha Gaṇapati Himself gives His final *darśana* and *prasāda* to one and all. Gifts are distributed and joyously opened. Happy children. Happy parents. Happy God.

A FAMILY PRAYER AFTER PAÑCHA GAṆAPATI

Enjoy this prayer during the next 360 days after Pañcha Gaṇapati. May His blessings flood your home with bounteous joy. May you and your family experience His boons of abundance, culture and sensitivity to the feelings of others that He will grant through the months ahead. Repeat the following



prayer together after each pūjā in your shrine until Lord Gaṇeśa returns again next year as Pañcha Gaṇapati.

Oṁ bhur bhuvaḥ suvaḥ
Ekadantāya vidmahe

O divine beings of all three worlds,
let us bring our minds to rest in
the *darśana* of Him who has one tusk.

Vakratuṇḍāya dhīmahi

Let us meditate upon Him who has the
form of an elephant with a curved trunk.

Tanno dantiḥ prachodayāt
May He guide us always along the right path.

Jai Gaṇeśa!
Jai Pañchamukha Gaṇapati!
Jai Gaṇeśa! Jai! Jai!
Aum śāntiḥ, śāntiḥ, śāntiḥ, Aum.

Victory to the Lord of Celestials!
Hail to the Five-Faced Lord of *gaṇas!*
Victory to the Lord of Celestials!
Hail to Gaṇeśa. *Jai, jai.*
Aum, peace, peace, peace, Aum.

Quite honestly, however, many Hindus still celebrate Christmas and often ask, "What's wrong with that?" My answer is that it dilutes and weakens our noble Sanātana Dharma tradition and leads children astray. Most of those who do indulge in Christmas were educated in Christian schools. They do not, however, observe Jewish, Islamic or the many other similar gift-giving days. Each religion educates its young in a sectarian way, for religionists believe that to learn one specific path is sufficient and necessary. Education should not be diluted by taking in a Christian holiday or those of all religions under one banner. And by the way, most Hindus do not realize that Christmas [as celebrated today] is not really an ancient holiday, but was begun in America in the early 1900s and spread out through the world from there.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Sweet Offerings

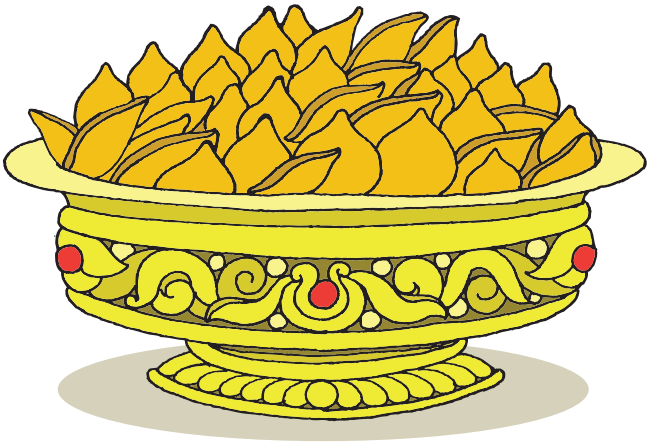
Himalaya peaks in snow in China from spaace, NASA

Sweet Offerings

Mishṭānna Naivedyam

मिष्टान्ननैवेद्यम्

PILLAIYAR HAS A SWEET TOOTH, JUST LIKE EVERYONE ELSE. FOR EACH special pūjā to Him, goodies are carefully prepared in a worshipful mood while chanting mantras. *Modaka* balls are presented, among other sweets, on trays before Lord Gaṇeśa in temples and home shrines in over 120 countries, especially during festivals. Of course, foods for pūjā are never tasted or smelled during preparation or before being offered. They are enjoyed only after the pūjā, as *prasāda*. The spirit of *modaka* offering is captured in the following poem by one of Gaṇeśa's dearest devotees, Tirumati S.K. Jagadeswari of Bangalore, South India.



Mudakaratta Modaka

Aum Gaṇapati Aum.
Aum Gaṁ Gaṇapataye Namaḥ.
Vināyaka!—What is dear to Thee,
That will I offer Thee! With what fondness
Thou hold *kolukattai* in Thy Hand!
I know Thou like it. Thou art sweetness.
Mudakaratta modaka, with smooth rice dough,
Will I envelop and wrap
Jaggery sweet mix with sesame powder,
Cook in steam—that I serve Thee with devotion.

Recipe One: *Modaka*

Ball-Like Sweets

The following recipe will make approximately twenty lime-sized *modakas,* a treat for the children and a traditional offering in the temple. It takes about two hours to make them.

Ingredients and Utensils

1 lb. rice flour
2 cups jaggery (or 2 cups brown sugar with four tbsp. dark molasses added)
2 cups raw sesame seeds
2 grated coconuts (optional)
2 cups melted ghee or drawn butter
1 tsp. salt
banana leaf or waxed paper
a flour sifter or fine sieve
an *idli* or vegetable steamer

Directions

Roast the sesame seeds in a pan, without oil, until golden brown (5 to 10 minutes). Crack the seeds by rolling with a rolling pin or pounding. Add 4 tbsp. ghee to the jaggery to soften it, then mix in the sesame seeds and coconut thoroughly. (This mix may be refrigerated in jars for making quick sweets simply by adding a bit of ghee and shaping the dough into balls.)

Next sift the rice flour and toast it without oil until it browns slightly—about 5 to 7 minutes. Spread it out on a tray or table top when done, and allow to cool completely. While the rice flour is cooling, bring approximately a half gallon of water, with a tsp. of salt, to a rolling boil. Put the cooled, toasted rice flour in a bowl and make a well in the middle. Slowly pour a small amount of the hot water into the well and begin working it into the rice flour with your hands. Keep adding small amounts of the hot water, and work the flour into a ball of dough. It should be moist but not wet when you put it out on the table or breadboard. Knead the dough thoroughly so it is even in moisture and texture.

Next, place water in the bottom of the *idli* steamer and bring to a full boil. Spread a thin coating of ghee or oil on a piece of banana leaf or waxed paper. Take a lump of dough half the size of a lime and work it in your hands for a moment to remove the air and then pat it out flat and round on the leaf, about

as wide across as your palm. Make it a uniform thickness so it will cook evenly. Place a lump of the sesame-jaggery-coconut mixture into the center and wrap the dough up around the mixture. Pinch the dough into a cone-shape over the stuffing and wrap the leaf or paper up around it. (The *modakas* can also be round if desired.) Repeat until you have enough to fill your steamer. Place the assembled *modakas* in the steamer, spaced so as to not touch one another. Cover and steam until done (15 to 20 minutes). While they cook you can prepare the next batch. When cool enough to handle, dip the *modakas* in melted ghee. Now they are ready to offer.

Recipe Two: *Pudi Kolukattai*

Sweet Rice Flour Roll

Ingredients and Utensils

2 cups rice flour
1 cup jaggery or brown sugar
1 shredded coconut
1 tsp. salt
an *idli* or vegetable steamer
a pan for toasting the flour
banana leaf or tray

Directions

Heat the rice flour in a dry skillet until lightly toasted, then spread it out on a tray or table top to cool. Sprinkle a little water on it and add the salt, jaggery and coconut. Mix together, adding water only as needed. When it is well kneaded and firm, pinch the dough off into as many lime-sized balls as it will make. Roll into balls, or squeeze in the right hand to create a fist-shaped *kolukattai*. Bring water in the steamer to a boil and arrange the *kolukattais* in it, wrapped in banana leaves as in recipe #1. Steam until the balls are a light brown in color. Arrange on a banana leaf or tray and serve to Lord Gaṇeśa.

Recipe Three: *Yallu Kolukattai*

Sesame Seed and Sweet Rice Roll

This South Indian desert is commonly prepared for Gaṇeśa Chaturthī.

Ingredients and Utensils

1 cup sesame seeds
1 cup jaggery or brown sugar
4 cups rice flour
1 tsp. salt
oil or ghee
8 cups water

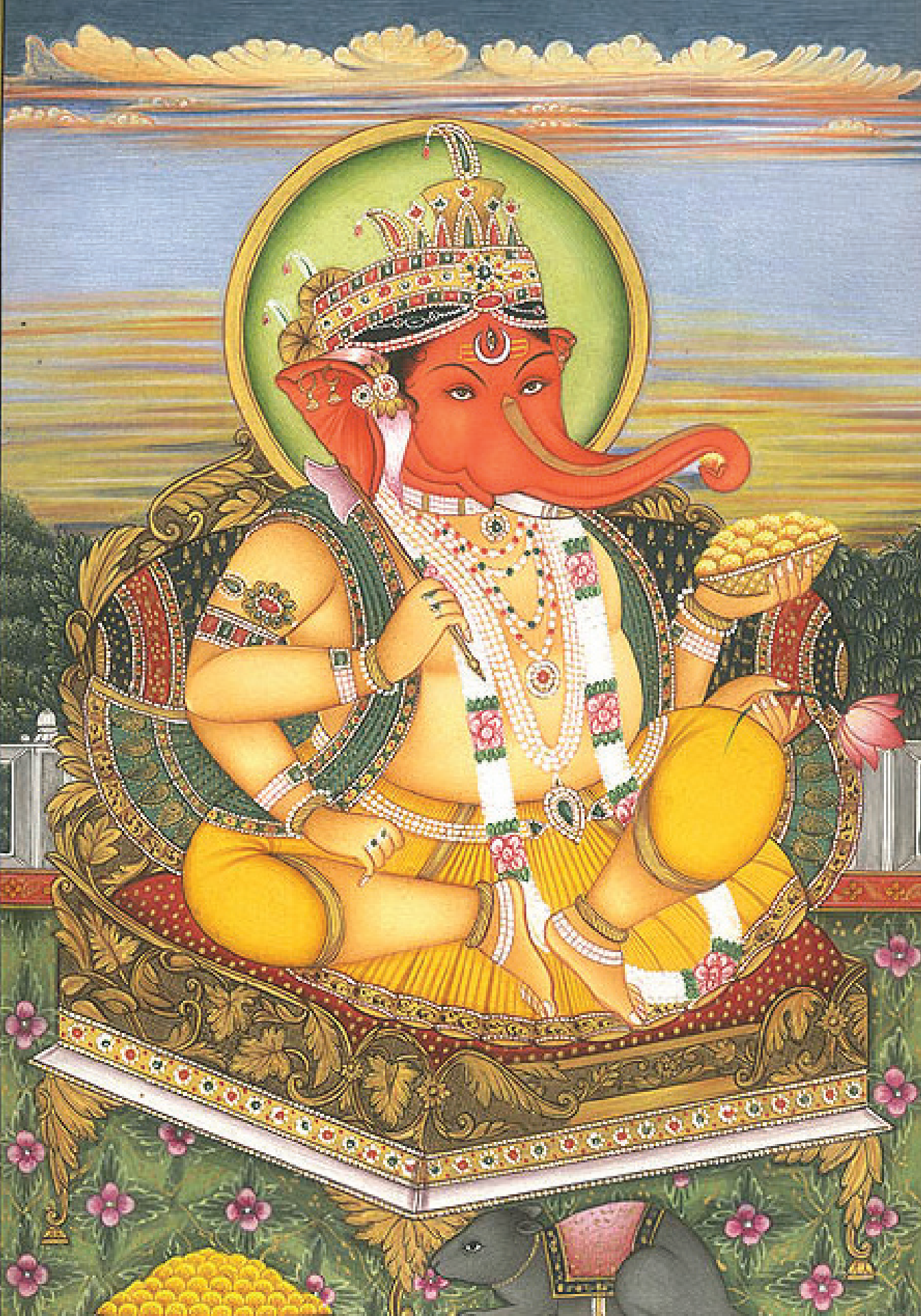
a steamer with flat rack
a skillet for toasting flour
a small piece of cheesecloth
a mortar and pestle, rolling pin or blender
banana leaf or tray

Directions

Fry the sesame seeds, without oil, until light brown, then mix with the jaggery. Then, using a pestle and mortar, rolling pin or blender, powder this mixture and set it aside. Heat the rice flour until lightly toasted, and spread it out on a tray or table top to cool. While it cools, add the salt to 8 cups of water in a pan and bring to a strong boil. Gather the cooled, toasted rice flour in a bowl and make a well in the middle. Slowly pour a small amount of the hot water into the well in the rice flour and begin working it into the rice flour with your hands. Keep adding small amounts of the hot water, working it together into a ball of dough. It should be moist but not wet when you put it out on the table or breadboard. Knead the dough thoroughly so it is even in moisture and texture. When it can be handled, squeeze the dough into lime-sized balls and set them aside.

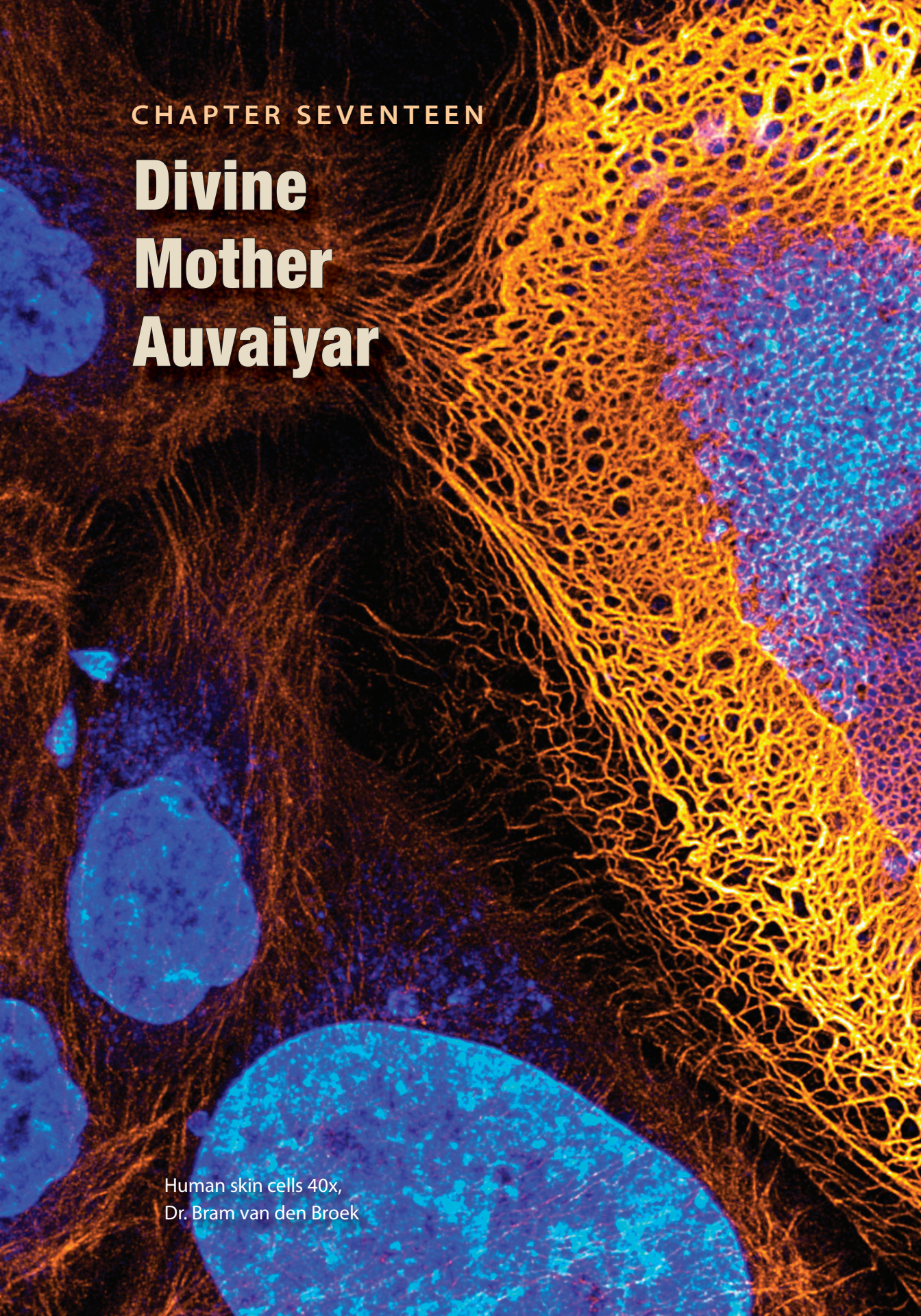
Smear a bit of oil or ghee on a banana leaf, tray or table top and roll or knead one of the dough balls out on it to a patty about 3 inches in diameter. Place a full tablespoon of the sesame and sugar mixture in the middle and fold the patty over in a crescent shape, pinching it closed where the edges meet. Repeat the process for the rest of the balls.

Bring the water in your vegetable or *idli* steamer to a boil and insert the steaming rack or a plate with small holes in it. The rack should be fairly flat and be covered over with a layer of cheesecloth or cotton weave. Arrange the *kolukattai* on the flat rack, as many as will fit without touching. Cover and steam for 15 to 20 minutes, or until done, depending on the size of your steamer. When finished, transfer them to a plate or banana leaf and allow to cool. Serve to Gaṇeśa as His fondest sweet. With any remaining sesame-sugar mixture you may make small Gaṇeśa figures. Keep them along with the cooked ones for pūjā. *Betel* leaves, nuts and fruits may be offered with these.

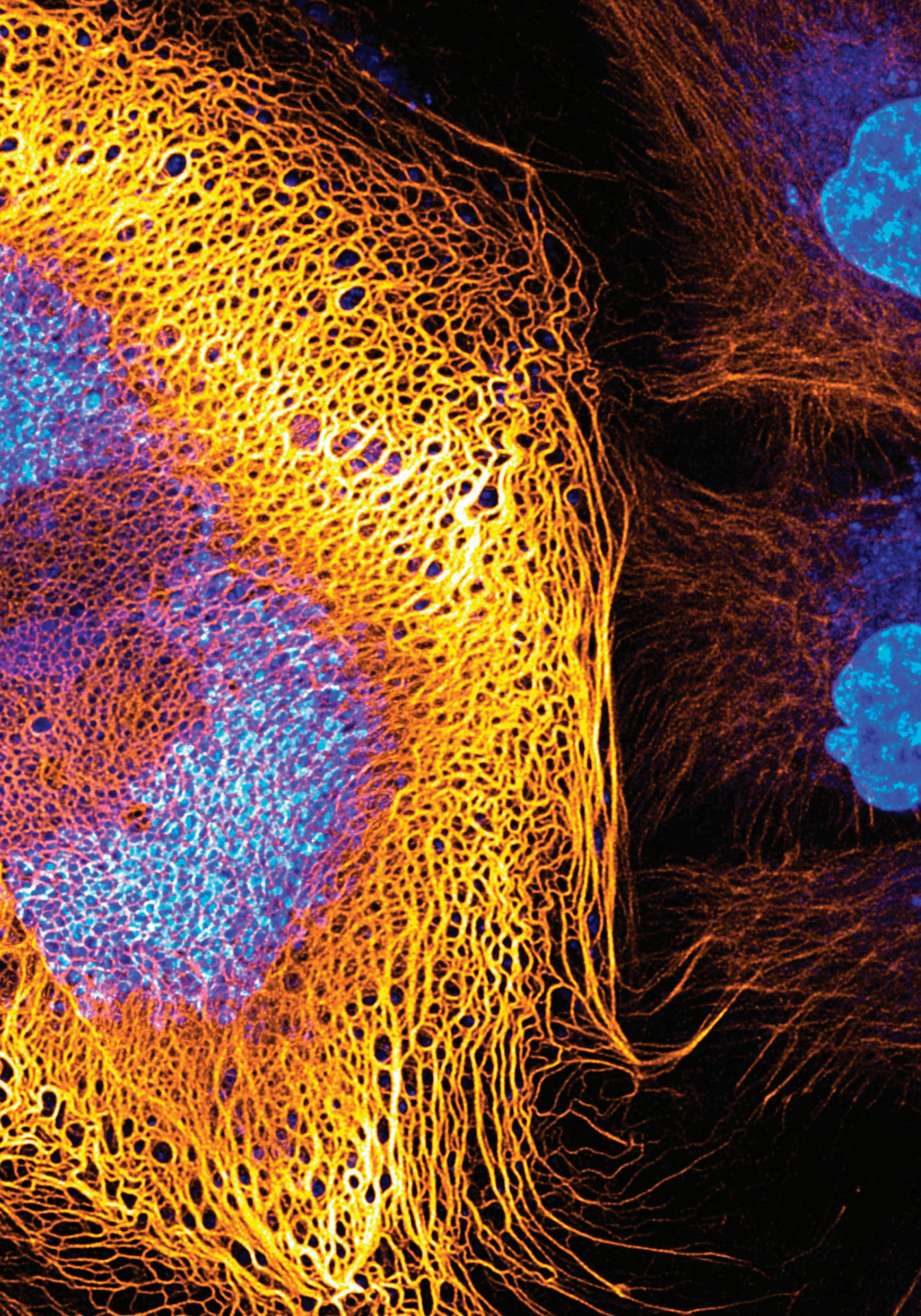


CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Divine Mother Auvaiyar



Human skin cells 40x,
Dr. Bram van den Broek



EXOTIC INDIA: KAILAS RAJ

Divine Mother Auvaiyar

Sādhvī Auvaiyār Mā

साध्वी औवैयार् मा

QUITE A LONG TIME AGO, IN THE NINTH CENTURY, THERE LIVED IN THE South Indian Tamil land a woman saint known as Auvai or Auvaiyar, a Tamil appellation for a respected senior mother or lady. Abandoned by her parents at birth, Auvaiyar was raised by a family of Panars, who were wandering minstrels. As a young girl, she was deeply devoted to religion and literary pursuits and wanted to serve the people. Known for her intelligence and extraordinary beauty, she had many aristocratic suitors, and in time pressure was brought to bear for arranging her marriage. While most young women would welcome such attention, it was for Auvaiyar more threat than opportunity. Her interests were philosophical and devotional, and her life revolved around her love of Śiva. She did not want to make a man the center of that universe. Faced with the impending marriage that her family would surely arrange, Auvaiyar wept and prayed before her chosen Deity, Vighneśvara, to save her from this fate: "O my Lord, these people are only after my youth and beauty; but I want to dedicate myself to the Goddess of learning and to the spread of learning. Please take away my youth and my beauty so that I can have peace and follow my chosen way of life." Gaṇeśa heard her prayer, and in the days that followed her skin wrinkled, hair grayed, eyes dulled, limbs stiffened and breasts sagged. Looking at her reflection in the village well, the maiden was overcome with joy, knowing she was now safe from the world, knowing that her loving Gaṇeśa had graciously answered her prayers.

Auvaiyar left the shelter of home, where most people find security, and wandered far and wide in the palmyra-covered Tamil kingdoms of Chola, Pāṇḍya and Chera. Her life was simple, dedicated to the practice of yoga and to following her guru's instructions. As her spiritual *sādhana* bore fruit, she slowly matured into spreading the tantras, the mystical teachings of the *siddhars,* the wisdom of God Śiva and the Gods. Her innumerable literary and philosophical works, for both children and elders, cover the entire gamut of human experience and testify to her profound wisdom. Her royal benefactors, among whom were Sri Sri Sri Adiyaman, Pari, Kari and Seraman, are historical figures distinguished by their bravery and benevolence. These mahārājas patronized her cultural works so that her fame spread far and wide. She is now acclaimed as the wisest woman of all ages in the chronicles of Indian culture.

Auvaiyar Ma was a contemporary and close associate of two noble Śiva bhaktas, Saint Sundarar and Seraman Perumal, ruler of the Chera kingdom, both extolled as great Śaiva saints in Sekkilar's epic hagiography, the *Periyapuranam*. One day, near the end of her life, it is said that Auvaiyar was in the midst of her daily worship of her beloved Gaṇeśa. She had a vision in which Saint Sundarar was proceeding to Mount Kailāsa, Śiva's abode, with his comrade, King Seraman. Sundarar was riding a white elephant, and Seraman was on a white horse. They were as aware of her as she was of them. She became disturbed and tried to rush her worship, filled with a yearning to join her spiritual friends on their last journey. But Lord Gaṇeśa appeared and told her to finish her rituals calmly and without haste, with the promise that she would be taken to Kailāsa ahead of her two friends. Thereupon she entered her trance even more deeply and sang the renowned hymn of praise entitled *Vināyaka Ahaval*. (This great song of religious devotion to Gaṇeśa is sung to this day throughout the Tamil land at the time of Gaṇeśa worship, particularly during the annual Gaṇeśa Chaturthī festival.) As she finished her worship and placed the sacramental offering at His gracious feet, Vināyaka appeared before her, lifted her in His gentle trunk and delivered her to the Śivaloka, to Mount Kailāsa, before the two friends arrived. When Seraman Perumal inquired how it was that she had arrived ahead of them, she sang this in her unique and charming Tamil:

O king, is there anything unattainable
To them who intensely contemplate
On the fragrant feet of the son
Of Ummaiyal, of sweet and comely speech?
The thunderous thud of the swift elephant
And that of the agile horse must give place
To that of the rider of this old dame!
He is none other than the mighty Mahāgaṇapati.

Vināyaka Ahaval
Adoration to the Remover of Obstacles

Translated from Tamil by Tiru K. Swaminathan
(From *Oṁ Gaṇeśa, the Peace of God)*

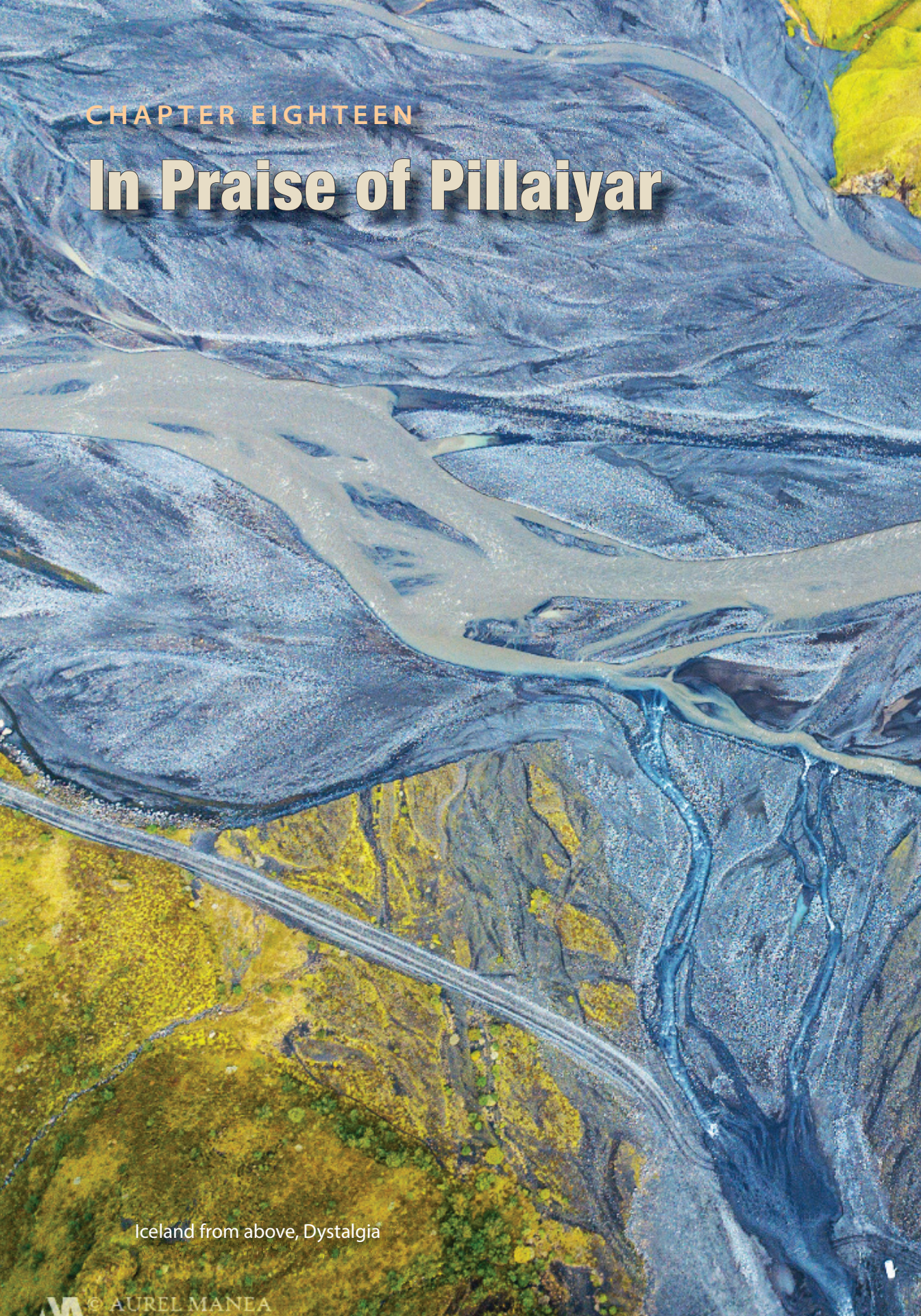
Cool, fragrant lotus feet
with anklets tinkling sweet,
gold girdle, flower-soft garment
setting off the comely hips,
pot belly and big, heavy tusk,
elephant face with the bright red mark,
five hands, the goad, the noose,
blue body dwelling in the heart,
pendulous jaws, four mighty shoulders,
three eyes and the three required marks,
two ears, the gold crown gleaming,
the breast aglow with the triple thread,
O Being, bright and beautiful!
Wish-yielding elephant, born of the
Master of Mystery in Mount Kailāsa,
mouse rider, fond of the three famed fruits,
desiring to make me yours this instant,
you like a mother have appeared before me
and cut the delusion of unending births.
You have come and entered my heart,
imprinting clear the five prime letters,
set foot in the world in the form of a guru,
declared the final truth is this, gladly,
graciously shown the way of life unfading.
With that unfailing weapon, your glance,
you have put an end to my heinous sins,
poured in my ear uncloying precepts,
laid bare for me the clarity
of ever-fresh awareness,
sweetly given me your sweet grace
for firm control of the senses five,
taught how to still the organs of action;
snapped my two-fold karma and dispelled

my darkness, giving, out of grace,
a place for me in all four states;
dissolved the illusion of triple filth,
taught me how to shut the five
sense gates of the nine-door temple,
fixed me firm in the six yogic centers,
stilled my speech, taught me
the writ of *iḍā* and *piṅgalā,*
shown me at last the head of *sushumṇā.*
To the tongue of the serpent that sinks and soars
you have brought the force sustaining the three
bright spheres of sun, moon and fire—
the mantra unspoken asleep in the snake—
and explicitly uttered it;
imparted the skill of raising by breath
the raging flame of *mūlādhāra;*
explained the secret of immortality,
the sun's movement and the charm
of the moon; the water lily's friend,
the sixteen states of the *prasāda* mantra;
revealed to me in thoughtful wisdom
the six-faced form and the meanings four;
disclosed to me the subtle body
and the eight separate modes of being;
the orifice of Brahman opened,
giving me miraculous powers,
by your sweet grace, and *mukti,* too;
revealed my Self to me and by your grace
swept away accumulated karma,
stilled my mind in tranquil calm
beyond speech and thought;
clarified my intellect, plunged me
in bliss which is the common ground
of light and darkness.
Boundless beatitude you have given me,
ended all affliction, shown the way of grace:
Śiva eternal at the core of sound,
Śivaliṅga within the heart,

atom within atom, vast beyond all vastness,
sweetness hid in the hardened node.
You have steadied me clear in human form
all besmeared with holy ashes;
added me to the congregation
of your servants true and trusty;
made me experience in my heart
the inmost meaning of the five letters;
restored my real state to me;
and rule me now, O Master of Wisdom,
Vināyaka. Your feet alone,
O Master of Wisdom, Vināyaka,
your feet alone, are my sole refuge.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

In Praise of Pillaiyar



Iceland from above, Dystalgia

In Praise of Pillaiyar

Pillaiyar Stutiḥ

पिल्लैयर् स्तुतिः

A Collection of Tamil Devotional Poetry Rendered
Into English by Sangaratna Dr. S.M. Ponniah

RANGING FROM TIRUMULAR TO KASSIAPPA SIVACHARYA, FIFTEEN DIFferent devotees have composed this anthology of Tamil hymns in praise of Gaṇapati, the Lord of Hosts, popularly known as Pillaiyar. They are sung daily in Hindu homes and temples where Tamil is spoken. An attempt has been made to give their meanings in English, but they need to be sung in prescribed Tamil tunes to attain maximum effect. In accordance with Āgamic tradition, all cultural concerts, literary endeavors and religious rites and rituals must begin with an invocatory verse seeking the grace of the Lord Gaṇapati to ensure success. The hymns of invocation found here help strengthen the belief that through love and devotion and ultimate surrender to God, man can attain *moksha.*

TIRUMANTIRAM, INVOCATION

ஐந்து கரத்தனை ஆனை முகத்தனை
இந்து இளம்பிறை போலும் எயிற்றனை
நந்தி மகன்தனை, ஞானக் கொழுந்தினைப்
புந்தியில் வைத்தடி போற்றுகின் றேனே.
திருமூலர் திருமந்திரம்

Implant in your intelligence the worshipful feet of Umāśaṅkara's son, the first-born, five-handed, elephant-faced, elegant One with twin white tusks curved like the crescent-moon. He is wisdom's embodiment.

TIRUMANTIRAM

கணபதி என்றிடக் கலங்கும் வல்வினை
கணபதி என்றிடக் காலனும் கைதொழும்
கணபதி என்றிடக் கரும மாதலால்
கணபதி என்றிடக் கரும மில்லையே.

If you but utter *Gaṇapati,* our Lord's name, the gaunt karmic ills that bind us fast will become loose; the Lord of Death himself will in submission raise his

hands in worship. Therefore, dutifully utter daily Gaṇapati's gracious name which will, without fail, your karmic bonds sever.

TIRUJNANA SAMBANDAR'S *TIRUKKATAIKKAPPU*

பிடியத னுருவுமை கொளமிகு கரியது
வடிகொடு தனதடி வழிபடு மவரிடர்
கடி கண பதிவர அருளினன் மிகுகொடை
வடிவினர் பயில் வலி வலமுறை இறையே.

The bountiful Being who reigns over Vallivalam's shrine, united with Umā-Maheśvarī, the Mother of the Universe, manifesting in manifold forms, bestowed upon His devotees the elephant-visaged God in order to remove their obstacles and impediments and to confer His grace upon all who follow the eternal Śaivite path.

ARATAMPATIYA PERUNTEVANAR

ஓத வினை அகலும்; ஓங்கு புகழ் பெருகும்
காதற் பொருள் அனைத்தும் கைகூடும் – சீதப்
பனிக் கோட்டு மால்வரை மேல் பாரதப்போர் தீட்டும்
தனிக் கோட்டு வாரணத்தின் தாள்!

Those who worship the redeeming feet of the single-tusked, elephant-visaged Lord of the heavenly hosts, who recorded with His tusk the *Mahābhārata* battle upon the snow-capped hills of the Himālayan mountains, will gain great glory, attain their hearts' desires and become freed from the fetters of karma.

SAINT AUVAIYAR

வாக்குண்டாம், நல்லமனமுண்டாம், மாமலராள்
நோக்குண்டாம், மேனி நுடங்காது பூ க்கொண்டு
துப்பார் திருமேனித் தும்பிக்கையான் பாதம்
தப்பாமல் சார்வார் தமக்கு.

Those who worship without fail the grace-granting feet of Gaṇeśa with flowers fresh and fragrant shall acquire eloquence of speech and fruitful friendship—besides gaining the graceful glance of the lotus-seated Lakshmī's eyes, which will ensure every human happiness on Earth.

SAINT AUVAIYAR

பாலும் தெளிதேனும், பாகும் பருப்பு மிவை
நாலும் கலந்துனக்கு நான் தருவேன் கோலஞ்செய்
துங்கக் கரிமுகத்து தூமணியே, நீ எனக்குச்
சங்கத்தமிழ் மூன்றுந் தா

I shall offer to you, O Lord, the delicacies four—fresh milk, pure honey, cane sugar with cereals mixed—O elephant-visaged, bright-jewelled Lord of the Universe, if you will enrich me with the triple-treasured Tamil tongue acclaimed by the ancient academies.

KABILADEVAR'S *IRATTAI MANI MALAI*

விநாயகனே வெவ்வினையை வேரறுக்க வல்லான்
விநாயகனே வேட்கை தணிவிப்பான், விநாயகனே
விண்ணிற்கும் மண்ணிற்கும் நாதனுமாம்
தன்மையினால் கண்ணிற் பணிமின் கனிந்து.

Vināyaka cuts asunder the very roots of all human suffering and sorrow. Vināyaka destroys all desires. Vināyaka is Lord indeed of heaven and Earth. Surrender, therefore, unto Him with hearts that melt with devotion.

திருவாக்கும், செய்கருமமும் கைகூட்டும் செஞ்சொல்
பெருவாக்கும், பீடும் பெருக்கும் உருவாக்கும்
ஆதலால், வானோரும் ஆனைமுகத்தானைக்
காதலால் கூப்புவர் தம்கை.

Your words and deeds shall with success meet. Eloquence and eminence shall be your rewards. Therefore, worship Him even as the celestials raise their hands high in adoration and love of the elephant-visaged Vināyaka, the matchless Lord.

கணங்கொண்ட வல்வினைகள் கண்கொண்ட நெற்றிப
பணங்கொண்ட பாந்தட் சடைமேல் – மணங்கொண்ட
தாதகத்த தேன்முரலுங் கொன்றையான் தந்தளித்த
போதகத்தின் தாள் பணியப் போம்.

Your burdensome bonds of karma will disintegrate and dissolve if you but worship the grace-granting feet of Gaṇapati, the Lord of Hosts bestowed upon us all by the triple-eyed Lord Śiva, whose ruddy locks are entwined by a serpent strand and whose head is adorned by honey rich, bright golden konrai blooms which fill the air around with their fragrance.

NAKKIRADEVA NAYANAR'S *VINAYAKA AHAVAL*

வெண்ணீ றணியும் விமலன் புதல்வா
பெண்ணா முமையாள் பெற்றிடுந் தேவே
அரிதிரு மருகா அறுமுகன் துணைவா
கரிமுக வாரணக் கணபதி சரணம்
குருவே சரணம் குணமே சரணம்
பெருவயிற் றோனே பொற்றாள் சரணம்
கண்ணே மணியே கதியே சரணம்
விண்ணே யொளியே வேந்தே சரணம்.

O first-born son of Śiva who adorns His head with sacred ashes, beloved of Umāsundarī, Kumāran's companion, beloved of Hari! O dark-hued, elephant-visaged, elegant Lord of heavenly hosts, my divine guru, unto you, O Lord, I surrender myself. O matchless Lord! Embodiment of wisdom and all excellence—O portly Gaṇapati, unto your golden feet I surrender myself. O precious jewel bright! O heavenly light! O Lord of the universe, I surrender unto you.

NAMBI ANDAR NAMBI

தந்தையும் நீயே தாயும் நீயே
எமரும் நீயே ஈசனும் நீயே
போத ஞானப் பொருளும் நீயே
நாதமும் நீயே நான்மறை நீயே
அரியும் நீயே அயனும் நீயே
திரிபுர தகனஞ் செய்தவன் நீயே
சத்தியும் நீயே சதாசிவம் நீயே
புத்தியும் நீயே புராந்தகன் நீயே
பத்தியும் நீயே பந்தமும் நீயே
முத்தியும் நீயே மோஷமும் நீயே
ஏகமும் நீயே என்னுயிர் நீயே
தேகமும் நீயே தேகியும் நீயே
உன்னரு ளன்றி யுயிர்த்துணை காணேன்
பின்னொரு தெய்வம் பேசவு மறியேன்.

You are indeed my father and mother both, my kith and kin—the infinite Lord, wisdom's embodiment, substance of all sound and the *Vedas* four. You are indeed Hari and the lotus-seated Brahma, Śakti and Sadāśiva, the triune beings. The dauntless destroyer of the roving cities three, that dared to defy You! You are the Lord of heaven and Earth, devotion and its binding force, *moksha* and its meaning. O matchless Lord! My life is Yours, and You are my sole support. But for Your grace, friends I've none. O Indwelling Lord, I'll speak only of Your glory!

NAMBI ANDAR NAMBI

என்னை நினைந்து அடிமை கொண்டு என் இடர் கெடுத்துத்
தன்னை நினையத் தருகின்றான் – புன்னை
விரசு மகிழ் சோலை, வியன் நாரையூர் முக்கண்
அரசு மகிழ் அத்தி முகத்தான்.

The triple-eyed Pillaiyar, enshrined under the shade of the flower-filled *punnai* tree in splendid Naraiyur Park, thinking of me, enslaved me, removed all my ills and impediments and conferred upon me His infinite grace. My thoughts are of Him and none else on Earth.

SEKKILAR'S *PERIYAPURANAM*

எடுக்கும் மாக்கதை இன்தமிழ்ச் செய்யுளாய்
நடக்கும் மேன்மை நமக்கருள் செய்திடத்
தடக்கை ஐந்துடைத் தாள்செவி நீள்முடிக்
கடக் களிற்றைக் கருத்துள் இருத்துவாம்.

Before I venture to narrate in vivid Tamil verse the moving great story of the ennobling lives of the saintly sixty-three enslaved by the Lord Śiva, I shall first retain in my mind the guiding hand of the dark-hued, high-crowned, five-handed Gaṇapati, in order that we may all gain by His divine grace the enriching rewards of this endeavor.

UMAPATI SIVAM

வானுலகும் மண்ணுலகும் வாழ மறைவாழப்
பான்மை தருசெய்ய தமிழ் பார்மிசை விளங்க
ஞானமத, ஐந்துகர மூன்றுவிழி, நால்வாய்
ஆனைமுகனைப் பரவி அஞ்சலி செய்கிற்பாம்.

In order that, O man, the heavens and Earth may prosper and thrive, the Vedic ways endure and the sacred Tamil tongue be renowned the world over, worship without fail the sagacious, five-handed, triple-eyed, elephant-visaged Vināyaka of victory.

KUMARA GURUPARAR

சீர்கொண்ட காசிநகர் சேர்துண்டி ராஜனெனும்
பேர்கொண்ட வைங்கரற்குப் பேசுபுகழ்த்
தார்கொண்ட நற்றிருப்பாட் டீரைந்தும் ஞாலமிசைத்
தொண்டரெலாங் கற்றிருப்பார் மேலாங் கதி.

Those who sing with devotion this garland of twice-five hymns in praise of the elephant enshrined at famed Varāṇasī washed by the sacred Gaṅgā—known by His devotees as Ḍhuṇḍhirāja Gaṇapati, the five-handed Lord—shall surely attain in time the heavenly abode above.

KASSIYAPPA SIVACHARYA'S *KANDAPURAIAM*

மண்ணுலகத்தினிற் பிறவிமாசற
எண்ணிய பொருள் எல்லாம் எளிதின் முற்றுறக்
கண்ணுதல் உடையதோர் களிற்றுமாமுகப்
பண்ணவன் மலரடி பணிந்து போற்றுவோம்.

In order that your birth becomes free of its fetter and you attain with ease human perfection on Earth, worship, O man, with devotion true the flower-like feet of the triple-eyed, elephant-visaged divine guru, Mahāgaṇapati, who grants without fail all your wishes.

ARUNAGIRINATHAR'S *TIRUPUGAL*

உம்பர்தருத் தேனுமணிக் கசிவாகி
ஒண் கடலிற் றேனமுதத் துணிர்வூறி
இன்பரசத் தேபருகிப் பலகாலும்
என்றனுயிர்க் காதரவுற் றருள்வாயே
தம்பிதனக் காகவனத் தனை வோனே
தந்தைவலத் தாலருள்கைக் கனியோனே
அன்பர்தமக் கானநிலைப் பொருளோனே
ஐந்து கரத்தானை முகப் பெருமானே.

O five-handed Lord! By Your innate wisdom You gained the coveted fruit from Umāśaṅkara's hand. O matchless Lord who relishes the nectar churned by the celestials out of the shimmering sea, did You not venture forth Your beloved brother to help wed the doe-eyed Valli upon the Kuruñchi hill? O refuge of Your devotees! My labored life on Earth you must support and sustain. Enslave me by Your grace.

ARUNAGIRINATHAR'S *TIRUPUGAL*

கைத்தல நிறைகனி அப்பமோ டவல்பொரி
கப்பிய கரிமுகன் அடிபேணிக்
கற்றிடும டியவர் புத்தியி லுறைபவ
கற்பக மெனவினை கடிதேகும்
மத்தமு மதியமும் வைத்திடு மரன்மகன்
மற்பொரு திரள்புய மதயானை
மத்தள வயிறனை உத்தமி புதல்வனை
மட்டவிழ் மலர்கொடு பணிவேனே
முத்தமி ழடைவினை முற்படு கிரிதனில்
முற்பட எழுதிய முதல்வோனே
முப்புரம் எரிசெய்த அச்சிவ னுறைரதம்
அச்சது பொடிசெய்த அதிதீரா
அத்துய ரதுகொடு சுப்பிர மணிபடும்
அப்புன மதனிடை இபமாகி
அக்குற மகளுட னச்சிறு முருகனை
அக்கண மணமருள் பெருமாளே.

I'll seek in worship the feet of the one who dwells within the minds of the learned—one whose firm hand is filled with the pomegranate fruit and delicacies sweet.

I'll offer flowers fresh for the one who destroys the inherited karmic ills of all His devotees—the broad-shouldered being born of Umāśaṅkara whose head is adorned by the crescent moon and the *konrai's* bloom.

I'll offer fragrant flowers unto the redeeming feet of portly Gaṇapati, born of Gaurīśaṅkara, the first-born, who did inscribe with His own tusk the *Mahābhārata* epic.

Upon the Himālayan peaks I'll worship true the redeeming feet of the valiant one who dared to break the chariot wheel of the three-eyed Lord, whose mere laughter destroyed the roving cities three of the *adharmic asuras.*

I'll worship the feet of the wise being who, by His timely intervention on Bālasubrahmaṇya's behalf, performed the marriage rites of youthful Kumaran and the doe-eyed Valli upon the Kuruñchi Hill.

ABHIRAMI PATTAR'S *ABHIRAMI ANTATI*

தாரமர் கொன்றையும் சண்பக
மாலையும் சாத்தும் தில்லை
ஊரர்தம் பாகத்து உமைமைந்த
னேஉல(கு) ஏழும்பெற்ற
சீரபி ராமி அந் தாதிஎப்
போதும்என் சிந்தையுள்ளே
காரமர் மேனிக் கணபதி
யேநிற்கக் கட்டுரையே.

O dark-hued Gaṇapati, son of Umāsundarī who mothered the seven worlds and is ensconced in the Lord of Tillai, He who is ever adorned by bright *konrai* blooms and *champaka* garlands. Dwell You must, O Lord, within my mind and being as I sing of Abhirami, the paragon of beauty, in this anthology of a hundred hymns by Your benign grace.

RAMALINGA ADIGAL'S *TIRU ARUTPA*

முன்னவனே யானைமுகத்தவனே, முத்தி நலம்
சொன்னவனே, தூய்மைச் சுகத்தவனே மன்னவனே
சிற்பரனே, ஐங்கரனே, செஞ்சடையஞ் சேகரனே
தற்பரனே நின்தாள் சரண்.

O first-born, elephant-visaged harbinger for good tidings who guides mankind unto the attainment of *mukti;* the immanent Lord, five-handed son of Śiva of the sacred tresses, unto Your feet I surrender myself.

FROM SENTHANAR'S *TIRUPPALLANDU*

குழல்ஒலி யாழ்ஒலி கூத்தொலி ஏத்தொலி
எங்கும் குழாம் பெருகி
விழல்ஒலி விண்ணளவும் சென்று விம்மி
மிகு திருவாரூரின்
மழவிடையார்க்கு வழிவழி ஆளாய்
மனஞ்செய் குடிப்பிறந்த
பழவடியாரொடுங் கூடி எம்மானுக்கே
பல்லாண்டு கூறுதுமே.

Your devotees, O Lord, are gathered in groups to dance in joy and sing Your praise. The music of the flute and the vina's string resound in the heavens in praise of You who rides the white bull and rules over Tiru-arur. We've come to join Your dear devotees who've enslaved themselves for succeeding generations. We are gathered to sing Your eternal glory.

SEKKILAR'S *PERIYAPURANAM*

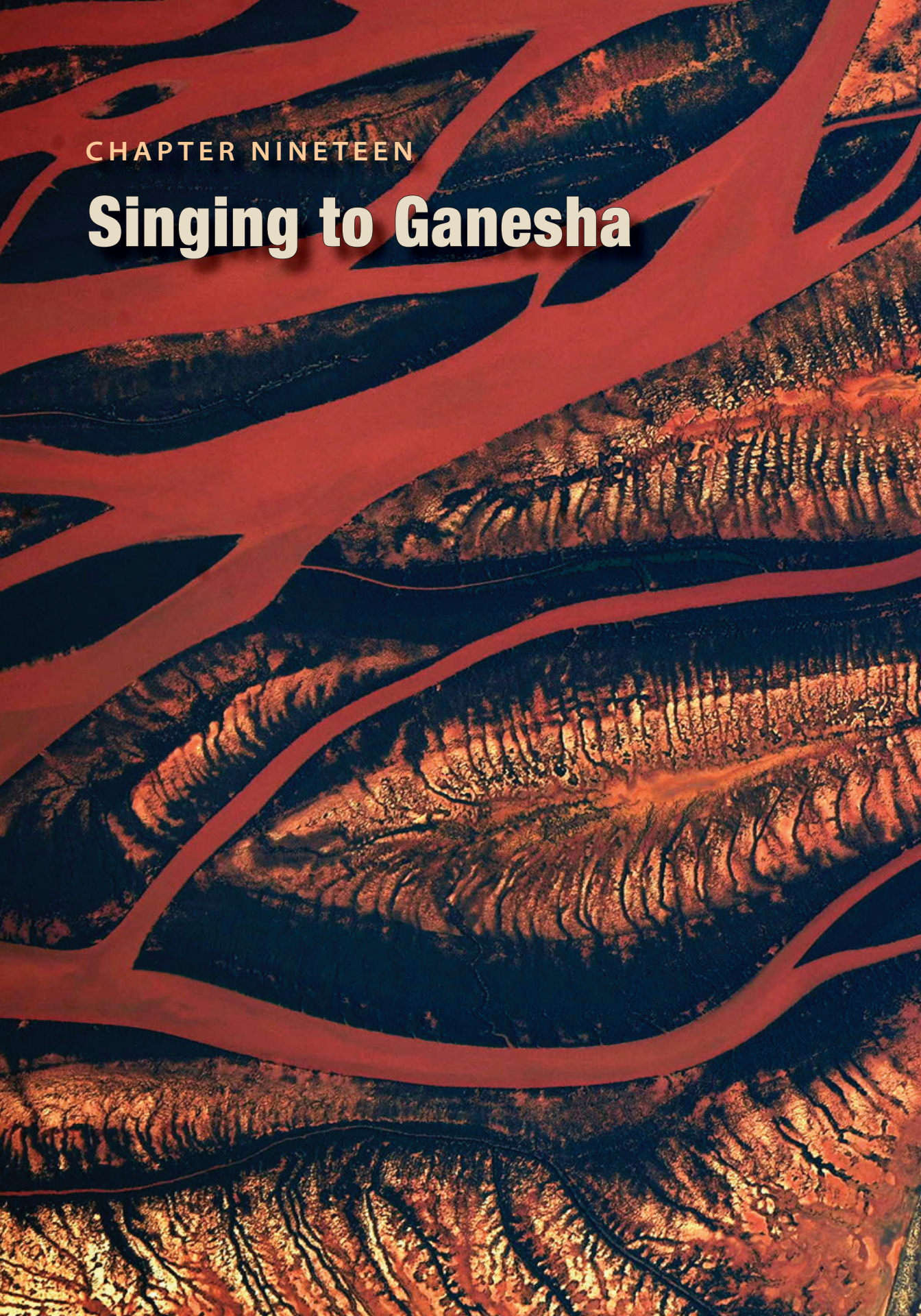
ஐந்து பேரறிவுங் கண்களே
கொள்ள வளப்பருங் கரணங்கணாற்கும்
சிந்தையேயாக குணமொரு மூன்றுந்
திருந்து சாத்து விகமேயாக
இந்து வாழ் சடையானாடு மாணந்த வெல்லையில்
தனிப் பெருங்கூத்தின் வந்து பேரின்ப
வெள்ளத்துள் திளைத்து மாறிலாமகிழ்ச்சியில்
மலர்ந்தார்.

The throbbing senses five become by the eyes absorbed, the intrinsic organs four become in the mind absorbed and the innate *guṇas* three become transformed into one *sattvic* state for those who behold the singular dance of joy by Him who adorns His tresses long with the crescent moon, delighting in everlasting bliss, immersed in an ocean of love.

BENEDICTORY VERSE BY KASSIAPPA SIVACHARYA

வான் முகில் வழாது பெய்க, மலிவளம் சுரக்க மன்னன்
கோன்முறை அரசு செய்க, குறைவிலாது உயிர்கள் வாழ்க
நான் மறை அறங்கள் ஓங்க, நற்றவம் வேள்வி மல்க
மேன்மை கொள் சைவநீதி விளங்குக உலகம் எல்லாம்.

May the rain-rich clouds descend without fail and enrich this earth. May the monarchs rule this resplendent earth with unfailing justice. May all living beings of this enduring earth live without want. May all righteous deeds, governed by the *Vedas* four, prevail upon this earth. May the sacrificial fires and deeds of penance grow in abundance. May the glorious Śaivite truths become renowned the world over.



CHAPTER NINETEEN

Singing to Ganesha

Madagascar from space, Ricky Arnold, NASA

Singing to Gaṇeśa

Gaṇeśa Bhajanam

गणेशभजनम्

OMETIMES WE FEEL A GREAT LOVE OF GOD; SOMETIMES THE GRACE OF Gaṇeśa fills us with such enthusiasm and joy that our heart bursts in an overflowing expression of devotion. Our bhakti turns the word into song, which in turn is offered back to the Deity whence came this gift of divine love and bliss. There may also be other times when our heart is dry, our mind distracted; we feel forlorn and distant from Gaṇeśa. At such times devotional singing is a simple, sure way to raise our spirits up to a level where we can commune with Gaṇeśa once again. Or we may find ourself together with other Hindus who want to join in fellowship to joyfully affirm our religion and praise the Gods that guide us. So, we join together in song. In Hinduism this form of worship, called *bhajana* or *kīrtana,* is an age-old tradition, ranging from simple melodious repetition of the names of the Lord to the singing of inspired song/poems of great devotees. Remember that Hindu music has never been rigid like Western classical music, where a small deviation is viewed as error. In Hindu music melodies often vary from one village to another, singer to singer, one *satsaṅga* to another. Infinite diversity, tolerance and flexibility is a central theme of Hinduism and its sacred music as well. Deep devotion is the standard. Particular notes, in time, in tune or not are hardly noticed. If you are singing with genuine feelings and awareness, then even the song itself will be transcended. Before presenting some of these hymns for us all to use together, let us first consider the deeper meaning of *bhajana* as elucidated in a talk I gave at Kauai Aadheenam in Hawaii on October 16, 1978.

Singing to the Gods: Hindu Hymns of Invocation

THE HINDU APPROACH TO GOD IS WELL-DEFINED AND MYSTICALLY ORIENTED. it confidently proclaims that every soul is created by God and is destined to return to God; and it provides through its vast cultural and scriptural heritage both the intellectual insight and the pragmatic means for following that path and attaining life's ultimate

objective, spiritual realization. One of the legacies inherited by all Hindus is the rich and varied collection of sacred hymns, sung alone in the privacy of early morning worship or in gatherings of like-minded devotees whose combined invocations bring forth in each participant heightened communion with the Divine. There are many ways that Hindus offer devotion through chanting and song. Through the *sādhana* of japa yoga, the holy names of the Deities and sacred mantras are chanted both silently and aloud as a constant remembering. Pilgrims to the temple will assemble in the outer chambers to hear skilled musicians and singers well-versed in age-old devotional arts, fully capable of turning the mind toward God and away from the world through the subtlety and beauty of their lyrical offerings. Religious epics and stories filled with history and with parable are related to large congregations through dramatic choral presentation. Devotees gather in small and large groups throughout the world to chant in unison, generally led in turn by one among them and then another, singing their praises to the Gods to the accompaniment of the harmonium, drums, *tambūrā* and cymbals. This is called *bhajana*. It is certainly the most popular form of Hindu devotional singing.

For thousands of years Hindus have gathered in conclave to share hours of the outpouring of their love of the Gods. Their chants have filled the temple chambers, the village hall and the private courtyard; but mostly it has filled and thrilled those who participated with a full heart. In the advanced stages of bhakti it matters little whether we are alone or with others when chanting the names of the Lord, for that mature state is steadfast in the higher devotional sensibilities, unruffled by the external world of name and form. Yet few have attained the serene heights of perfect devotion, and fewer still are steady enough to maintain such states once reached. The steadying support of others who also share spiritual goals in life can enhance the individual aspirant's efforts, keeping him firmly on the Sanātana Dharma, the Eternal Path. When these sacred gatherings are regular, either daily or weekly, they generate a spiritual dynamic in the lives of all who participate, a shared energy to which all contribute and from which all can draw.

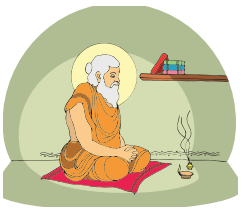
The Working Together of Three Worlds

Bhajana is an essential part of the Hindu religious life. My *satguru*, Sage Yogaswami of Columbuthurai, Sri Lanka, placed great importance on chanting. He would say, "Sing, sing, sing. Morning, noon and evening we will chant with joyful hearts the blessed name of Śiva. Sing always of the Lord and meditate on Him who bestows virtue, wealth, happiness and liberation."

We join a revered band of devotees when we chant the praises of God. Hindus sing to God, to the Gods, to the multitudes of devas within their temples and home shrines who will gather around devotees when they congregate together almost anywhere. Each Hindu has his or her own guardian devas who are never far away, always available and willing to assist from an inner world of consciousness, from the Second World, or astral plane. These guardian devas attend Hindus from the time of birth or from a previous birth or from a ceremony or event occurring anytime in life when they enter the great assembly known as the Hindu religion. When two or more Hindus gather, each brings to that assembly—depending upon the personal *sādhana* that the Hindu has performed in this life and in past lives—his own devas to add to the throng.

As sincere devotees meet, the inner-plane devas form a conclave in the same room, invisible to the physical sight but fully visible to the inner sight and sensed through the feeling of sanctity that pervades the atmosphere of the room. As the singing of the Hindu hymns commences, other Second World devas are drawn according to the sum of devotional intensity. These devas sing together in the inner planes in concert with the First World *bhajana,* and that calls others, until a multitude of beings in the Second World join in the same chorus as is being sung in the First World.

Sincerity of Purpose



We must realize that when we sing *bhajana,* the devas of the Second World and even the Gods of the Third World hear our intonations and are aware, too, of the depth of our devotion. They are fully aware of us, though we may be only partially aware of them. They know and appreciate the meaning of the words that we chant. For this reason it is very necessary that each one deeply understand the meaning of the words, even when those words are in Sanskrit. The meaning, the tones of the voice, the thought behind the meaning, the feeling behind the thought—all these give power to the *bhajana,* add their beauty to the sounds that radiate out from our love and devotion, taking that meaning, thought, feeling and sound from this macrocosm into the microcosm of the devonic world and through that into a greater macrocosm where the Gods live. High tones penetrate deepest, piercing through the microcosm into the great macrocosm that we know as the inner worlds. Also, concentration of mind, awareness of meaning and sincerity of inner feeling add to the ability of the chant to penetrate to spiritual

depths or, in their absence, to remain little more than a sweet song hardly distinguishable from any other song.

Singing Is Prayer and Thanksgiving

Most Hindu chants are a joyous praising of the Divine. They can also be a reminder that there are subtle inner worlds of existence, a pleading that we may be more aware of them and more in harmony with their great beauties and truths, and an invocation of the Gods and even of certain benefits which they are empowered to bestow. Our hymns are a thanksgiving for all that we have, for all the good that has been granted to us in life by our Gods, or during an immediate time span. Of course, we are only capable of such thanksgiving when we inwardly feel grateful, content within ourselves and not dissatisfied with our dharma, not struggling to oppose our karma in this life but to fulfill it by bringing it into harmony with our religion. True thanks must be offered, or true petitions made, with the mind and emotions and thought in a single accord as the Sanskrit lyrics are enunciated. How would the God perceive a devotee who is chanting something to him, pleading to him through the tones of his voice, but simultaneously thinking about something totally different and unrelated—or if he is not thinking at all but merely mouthing meaningless syllables? Obviously the devotee will be inwardly seen as insincere and shallow, saying things that he doesn't really mean. It would be unwise to assume that the Gods are incapable of perceiving such states of mind. They are, in fact, more fully aware of the devotee's inner feeling and thinking states during *bhajana* than the devotee himself.

One bathes before coming to *satsaṅga* or *bhajana*. One prepares the mind and the emotion, knowing that he is, in a sense, on stage and performing before beings of great intelligence who are able from their microcosm to look into this macrocosm. These Gods are being invoked, and they will attend if the invocation is properly and sincerely performed with a devout heart and a mind that is one-pointed in spiritual pursuit. The devas in the Second World—which is the world of astral or mental bodies—will respond because their function, their fulfillment and dharma on their plane of consciousness is to help evolution in the First World, physical plane, and thereby further evolve themselves. They are spiritual helpers, working with the First World to open it up to the Third World. All the worlds work together when Hindu devotees gather together. The astral beings who work on the lower astral plane contact more evolved beings in the higher Second World who are able to themselves work

with the individual and to invoke the Third World. The personal Deity is thus reached, and the blessings flood forth from within.

It is very important that we are sincere when we chant these holy hymns that have reverberated in the nerve systems of uncounted seekers and sages down through the millennia. We would not want to be seen as insincere or inattentive, saying one thing and thinking another, or saying and thinking one thing and feeling another. Presenting ourselves to the Gods through prayerful song or just appearing before them in the temple precincts, we want to be in a most pious and profound state of mind. Ordinary affairs must be temporarily relinquished, along with ordinary feelings and thoughts. Yet, you would not want to pretend either. If you are unhappy when you come to the temple, they must see that unhappiness; and you must not try to cloud or conceal it from them or yourself. Then they can help. The Gods are going to see you the way you are from their vantage point in the microcosm looking out and into this macrocosm.

Depth of Meaning and Feeling

For those of you who may not know the Sanskrit language, it is necessary to make a special effort to understand, in English or in the language with which you are most familiar, what is being chanted in Sanskrit during *bhajana.* When we chant together "Gaṇeśa Śaraṇam," it is essential that we know that it means "I take refuge in the *darśana* of Lord Gaṇeśa." Even knowing the meaning is not enough. You must actually take refuge in the overpowering feeling of Gaṇeśa's presence as you visualize His *mūrti,* or form. You must also be able to awaken to the higher emotional realms, to rise to a devotional mood as you are singing to the Gods, a mood that itself carries you into Gaṇeśa's protective refuge, a mood that awakens you to the presence of Gaṇeśa's love and compassion. If you are singing to the Gods with such genuine feelings, then the song itself has been transcended even while you are in the midst of your lyrical worship. Now, this is very important. That makes your chanting truly beneficial, beneficial not only for yourself and those who are with you but for all mankind.

You could be singing *Gaṇeśa śaraṇam, śaraṇam Gaṇeśa* most beautifully, with no thought deeper than enjoying the sounds and realizing that you were on key and another in the room was not. Or you could be singing and at the same time thinking about some problem that came up during the day or an event that will take place in the days to come.

Little benefit is to be derived from such an approach to *bhajana.* Similarly, when the time comes at a later date for you to be initiated into the art of meditation, there will be no real meditation if the mind is allowed to wander aimlessly, mulling over things of the past and imaginings of the future. *Bhajana* too, is a *sādhana* that requires preparation, attention and concentration. It is not an external performance meant to entertain the participants. It is an internal performance that invokes the inner-plane Gods and draws awareness deep within. Approach your chanting as a devotional *sādhana.* Let it be a time of communion with the deepest strata of consciousness within you and a communication with the Gods. Study the chants. Memorize their meanings so that as your voice goes out into the physical room your awareness simultaneously pierces into inner dimensions.

From your own experience in the world you can understand how the Gods naturally perceive an aspirant whose body is joining in the *bhajana* but whose mind is elsewhere. People have come to you and said things that they did not mean. People have talked with you and you knew that they were thinking about something entirely different and thinking only absent-mindedly about the conversation. You have observed the results when people approach

anything half-heartedly, perhaps preferring that they were somewhere else doing something else. Nothing permanent and valuable is ever accomplished even on the gross, physical plane by such an approach. Then how much more important is it that the subtle worlds, the deeper states of consciousness, be approached with mindfulness?

The Group Helps the Individual

A group that is chanting regularly, singing to the Gods day after day after day, gives the devas great power, a channel through which they can reach out and help other Hindus in the community and around the world. Within a hundred-mile radius inner-plane helpers assigned to guide Hindus, who are perhaps not religious Hindus, would come to the *bhajana* on the astral plane and be renewed themselves. Inner-plane helpers may also be renewed and inspired.

A large *satsaṅga* or *bhajana* conducted regularly at the same time can summon these thousands and thousands of guardian devas together in a single conclave, renewing and inspiring them. Then they go back to the First World Hindu whom they are bound to guard and guide and in turn uplift and inspire him. He may be lifted out of the fog of the outer mind in its morass of confusions and become inspired to pay closer attention to his religion. He may awaken a desire to go to the temple, to serve others more selflessly, and on and on. Such things can happen just because a group of devotees get together and sing to God, feel what they are singing, know the meaning of the words they are saying and the implications within the meaning of the words. Of course, children love to sing; and *bhajana* is universally enjoyed by children of all ages, providing one of the most wonderful ways to bring your sons and daughters fully into the religion. They should attend group *bhajana*s often. The family itself can chant together in the shrine room each day for at least a few minutes.

We want to take it all in, take in the tone, take in the thought, take in the feeling, take in the knowledge—take it all back to the source, back to the microcosm where you were living ten months before you were born in this physical world. You were there in the microcosm, fully aware, fully matured, working out your own spiritual destiny through helping those on this plane, awaiting another birth that would catapult you into an even greater evolution when you returned to the microcosm. So the microcosm is nothing with which you are not familiar. You came out of the microcosm and will return to it after the purpose of this birth has been fulfilled. It is really more your home than any structure on this Earth could ever be. So you are just contacting home when you invoke the Second World. It is nothing difficult. It is relatively easy, and you

can do it night after night after night as you sing here to the Gods. Know that there are people listening, people just like you, people on the lower astral plane and people on the higher astral planes. They, too, join in the chanting where they are. If you had an inner ear, you could stop chanting and they would all be heard chanting simultaneously. This has been done; these inner-plane chants have been heard. The more regular the *bhajana*, the deeper it penetrates into the inner worlds. We believe that religion is the working together of the three worlds, and in our *bhajana* this working together is a joyous ritual simultaneously celebrated on all planes of consciousness.

Association with Other Devotees

One of the great benefits to be derived from *bhajana* is the association with other devotees, others of your religion who believe as you do and whose strength is added to your own. This is known as *satsaṅga. Satsaṅga* is the traditional meeting of Hindu Truth-seekers, gathered often to read from scripture or to receive *upadeśa* from a swāmī or their own *satguru.* The company of good men and women who themselves exemplify the Hindu ideals, who are striving, who are devout and virtuous, is to be sought after. Such association will immeasurably enhance your own efforts.

It is very important in the world today that Hindu people gather together and express themselves in a religious way. *Satsaṅga* groups are formed all over the world wherever Hindus are found. The greatness of Hinduism lies in its diversity, and this diversity is also its greatest strength. This applies to the religion as a whole as well as to various groups within it. No single *satsaṅga* group will be quite like another, yet those within it must be in agreement on at least the major points of the philosophy that it represents.

When you join a *satsaṅga* group, this becomes your religious experience and focus. It is different from the experience of worship in the temple, and it is different from private meditation and devotions in your home shrine. When you go to worship in the temple, you are there alone even though others may be present. It is a most sacred and individual experience, a time set aside for communion with your personal Deity. Within the *satsaṅga* group, however, within that kind of *saṅga,* you are sharing your devotion with others. You temporarily set aside your own mind, your karma, for a period of time and work your mind within the context of the group, which is the combined mind or karma of those present. This by no means should be taken to be a total involvement or entangling of the various karmas, but is a temporary combining or merging of karmas for those few hours each week when the *satsaṅga* meets together.

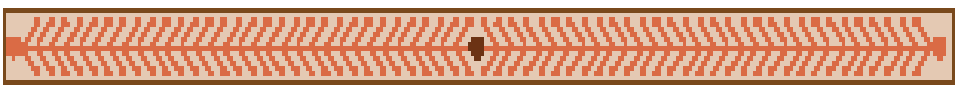
I have often said that the individual helps the group and the group helps the individual. This is to be clearly seen in the working of group devotions and chanting in *satsaṅga* groups. We are inspired, lifted above our personal concerns and able to give our thoughts entirely to the high purposes of the *satsaṅga;* and with everyone present doing this, a dynamic vibration is created, an environment that is conducive to further progress on the spiritual path.

Sharing Individual *Karmas*

There are many religious groups throughout the world sharing the same philosophy and beliefs, chanting the same *bhajanas* and meeting together regularly. Some of these groups are productive, while others are unproductive. The actual results which manifest as a consequence of the gathering of a *satsaṅga* group are totally dependent upon the combined karma of the group as a whole.

The one mind of the group is made up of both the positive and negative karmas of each member. This does not mean that if a group is unproductive or unhappy that certain members should be singled out and sent away, for that would only serve to create yet a greater unseemly karma for the outcast as well as for the group that inadvisedly cast him out. Rather, this indicates that the group must perform a deeper *sādhana,* a greater disciplined effort, that it must make a special effort to feel inwardly the meaning of the words as they are chanted and be in tune with the extraterrestrial vibratory rate of the devonic world. The group may also ponder whether the social period is excessively long, whether too much emphasis is being placed on the foods being served and whether one or more members are bringing their personal karmic implications and involvements into the group rather than taking these matters to the feet of the Lord. Above all, the group should realize that a problem exists within the mind of the group, which is no particular individual's fault or problem. It is simply an effect of accumulated and combined karmas of the entire membership and must be faced in this impersonal way.

A productive group is also a harmonious group, a useful group. Its members will want to distribute religious literature as a natural overflow of the energies that well up from within them during the *satsaṅga.* They will want to give food to the hungry. They will not be able to neglect the needy. They will naturally want to host a Hindu family newly arrived in their community, to visit Hindus in the hospital, to write letters for them, talk to them and see that they are properly cared for. There are so many practical things that a *satsaṅga* group can and should involve itself with, but this is possible only when all members are of a one mind, a one harmony.



If the group is an unproductive group, it will be found to be a group that is inharmonious and argumentative, one in which the *asuric* forces are perhaps more prevalent than the *devonic* forces. This must be dealt with positively, not run away from or avoided. If *asuric* forces have penetrated the group, it is best to chant sitting in a circle, thereby creating enough magnetism to lift the consciousness of the entire *satsaṅga* simultaneously. If the group is a harmonious group, then all may sit, as at traditional Hindu gatherings, with the women on one side of the room and the men on the other. It is always preferable to sit on the floor, for that releases certain forces from within the body that can greatly enhance the spiritual life of man. When we worship in a temple, we receive individual attention from the great beings of the Second and Third Worlds. That is our time for personal communication with the inner worlds, with the inner realms of our own being. But *satsaṅga* is different, and that difference should be realized by all present. It is a group religious experience. It enhances both the personal karma of every member as well as the collective karma of the one mind which is the *saṅga* itself.

I urge each *satsaṅga* group to look sincerely into its productivity and to seek creative ways that it can be useful to its members and to the community in which it lives. It is important that we use our energies well, that we do not waste

energy, do not waste our lives. *Satsaṅga* groups can search out ways to help the many thousands of Hindus who have migrated from the Holy Land to all parts of the world and would benefit from a kind word and a compassionate smile.

Conducting *Satsaṅga*

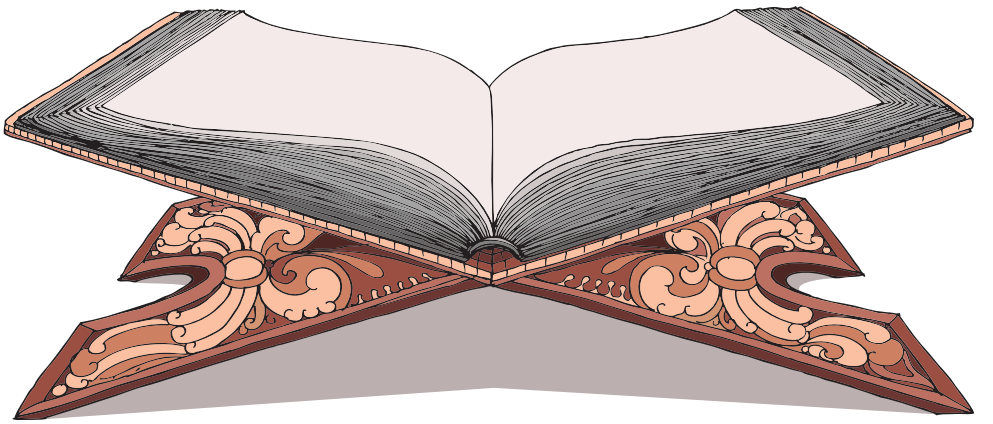
There are many ways that *satsaṅga* groups can be conducted, and there will be established groups with their own routines. New groups just being formed may wish to follow our schedule of twenty minutes of *bhajana* followed by twenty minutes of scriptural reading or *upadeśa* and then another twenty minutes of *bhajana*, making a total of one hour. It is customary to have *satsaṅga* groups move from one home to another each week or each month, and, of course, the leader and host of the *satsaṅga* that week is always the person in whose home the group is meeting. He or she would select the reading or recording to be used that week, or arrange for a talk by a swāmī or other spiritual leader. The host would also arrange the room, preparing a small altar which could have a picture of the Deity—Lord Gaṇeśa is agreeable to all—and pictures of the gurus of the various members of the *satsaṅga,* for all will not necessarily share the same preceptor. As a *satsaṅga* group grows in strength and maturity, these and other ways of helping our fellow man will blossom forth. That is the first sign that the *satsaṅga* has done its work on the inside, has begun to fulfill its purpose.

A Special Collection Of Hymns to Lord Gaṇeśa

For Young and Old Alike

On the following pages we have assembled several hymns for individual or group singing and chanting. We have put the chants into Western musical notation so they can be played easily on a harmonium. A free translation of the Sanskrit into English has also been added to inspire high-minded thought and visualization based on the meaning of the songs. Usually one person leads the group, and then another, with the leader chanting the verse initially, then the entire group repeating that verse once. The leader then chants the second verse, and so on. Often the leader, if he or she is musically adept, will make embellishments on the musical line; but the group generally repeats the verse in its simple form. Many chants start off slowly and gradually pick up in speed and volume. The length of the bhajan is left to the leader's discretion, but is usually limited to five or ten minutes.

These songs may be sung during formal *bhajana* and informally to yourself at other times during the day. Sing them during your morning sadhana period and silently to yourself throughout the day. Sing them before meals and to the children just before they go to sleep. Sing them as you work and in the car as you travel. When you are discouraged, sing. When you are inspired and creative, sing. When you are upset, sing. When you find yourself waiting somewhere and feeling there is nothing to do, sing to the Gods. Sing with a full heart. As you sing, listen for the silence within the sounds; for that silence is itself the voice of God.



Gītā

Gītā means song. *Gītās* can be sung solo or in unison by a group. The pace is relaxed. The words aid in devotional visualization. We seek to invoke the *darśana* and śakti of Lord Gaṇeśa, picturing Him in our minds while concentrating on His divine attributes. A deep communion with the joyous Lord is attained. Vighneśvara Gītā is often the first song taught to beginning students of Hindu music. Sing with all your heart this ode to our Loving Gaṇeśa. He will hear. Yes, He will hear. It is important to realize that, with His big ears and His astute mind, He knows everything at every point in time, even when eating a *modaka.* This is amusing. So, sing out loud; sing boldly His songs; and His grace will pour upon you with all the abundance under His control (which is actually all abundance).

SONG TO THE LORD OF OBSTACLES

verse 1 O Gaṇeśa, You are the red-colored leader
of the *gaṇas,* the ocean of compassion,
O elephant-faced Lord.

verse 2 The *siddhas* and *chāraṇas* ever in Your service, the grantor of all tattainment. O Vināyaka, we bow to You again and again.

verse 3 Master of all arts and knowledge, the best
one of all, we bow to You again and again.

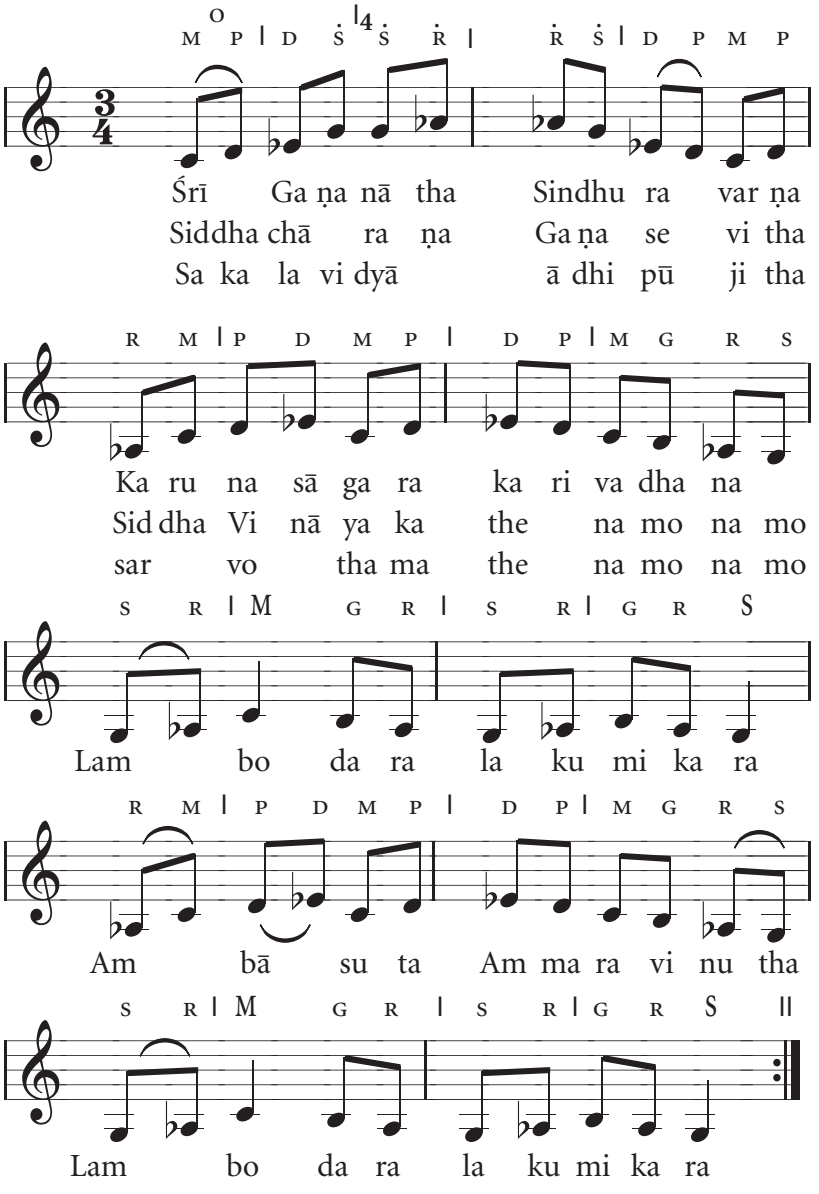
refrain Big-bellied Lord who blesses all with prosperity, Pārvatī's son, you are praised by all the Gods.

VIGHṆEŚVARA GĪTĀ

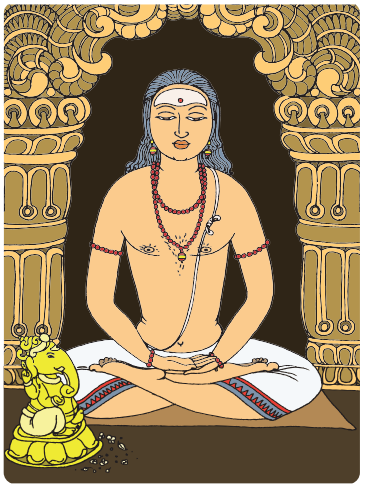
Composed by Pūrandaradāsa

Malahari Rāga **Rūpaka Tāla**

AROHANA: S R_1 M_1 P D_1 Ṡ AVAROHANA: Ṡ D_1 P M_1 G_3 R_1 S



Dhyānam



Dhyānam means "meditation." This form of song is usually done solo, slowly, in free time, with no instruments other than a drone. More prayer than music, the words of a *dhyānam* are often from our ancient Sanskrit scriptures. For singers, it is a devotional offering. For listeners, the words direct the mind to commune silently with Loving Gaṇeśa. A short meditative silence following any *dhyānam* is traditional. Not enough can be said about meditation. It is the perfection of the peaceful mind. What makes the mind not peaceful? Well, Gaṇeśa would explain in His exemplary way, "Among the realms beyond My reach, one is fear." Still, He can help, for fear is within His control, even though it resides as the emotion within the chakra directly below the *mūlādhāra* chakra upon which He sits: the four-petalled lotus of great beauty and strength rising above the waters of memory. Further below Him is the chakra of anger and rage in which the mind gives up its control to *asuric* forces. He, our loving Lord, prays for those in the state of anger, because mind and emotions out of control seals us from His grace. So, sing the song to lift up the *purusha* into its own pristine glory, and begin to change. That is the message of our loving God.

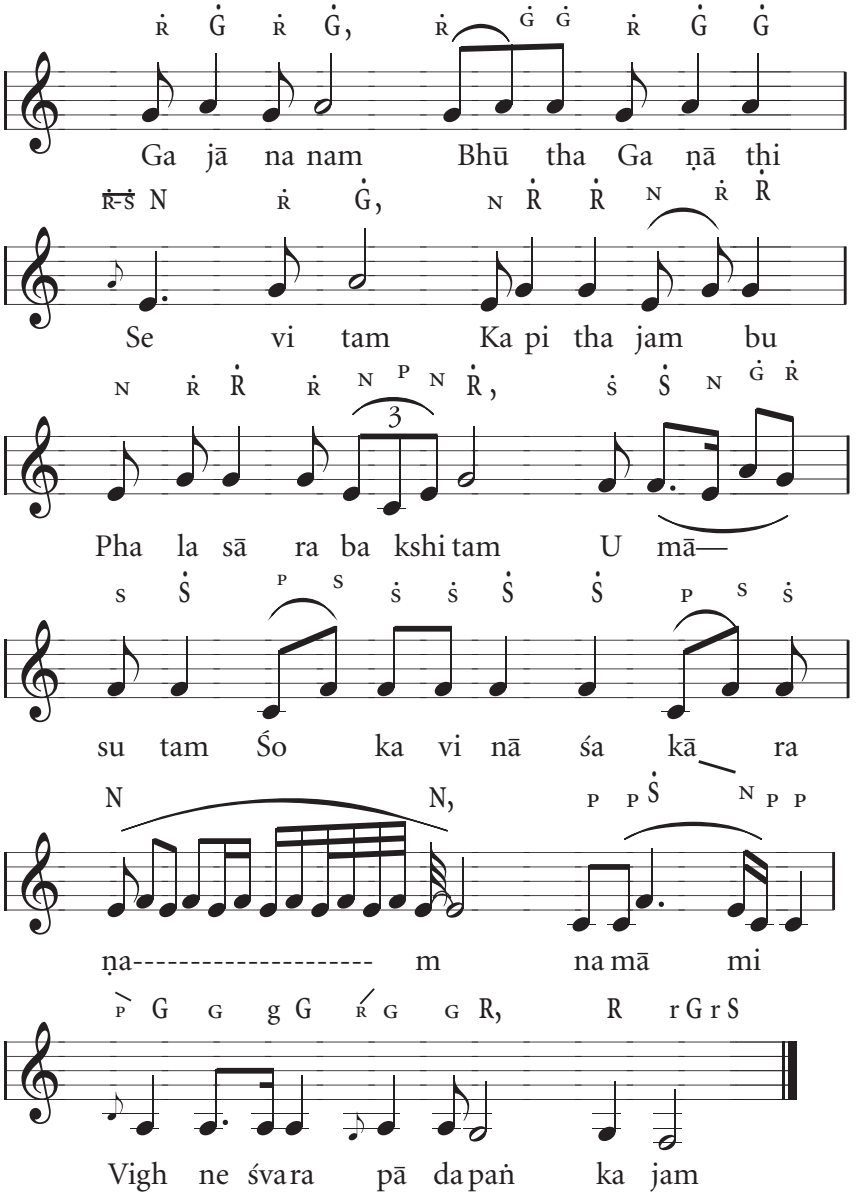
GAṆEŚA DHYĀNAM, "MEDITATION ON OUR LOVING GAṆEŚA"

Translation: O elephant-faced Lord Who is served by all creatures and satisfied with the juice of *kapittha* and *jambu* fruits, son of Umā, remover of sufferings and pains, O Remover of Obstacles, Vigneśvara, I bow at Your lotus feet.

GAṆEŚA DHYĀNAM

Hamsadhwani Rāga **Free Time**

AROHANA: S R_2 G_3 P N_3 Ṡ AVAROHANA: Ṡ N_3 P G_3 R_2 S



Bhajana

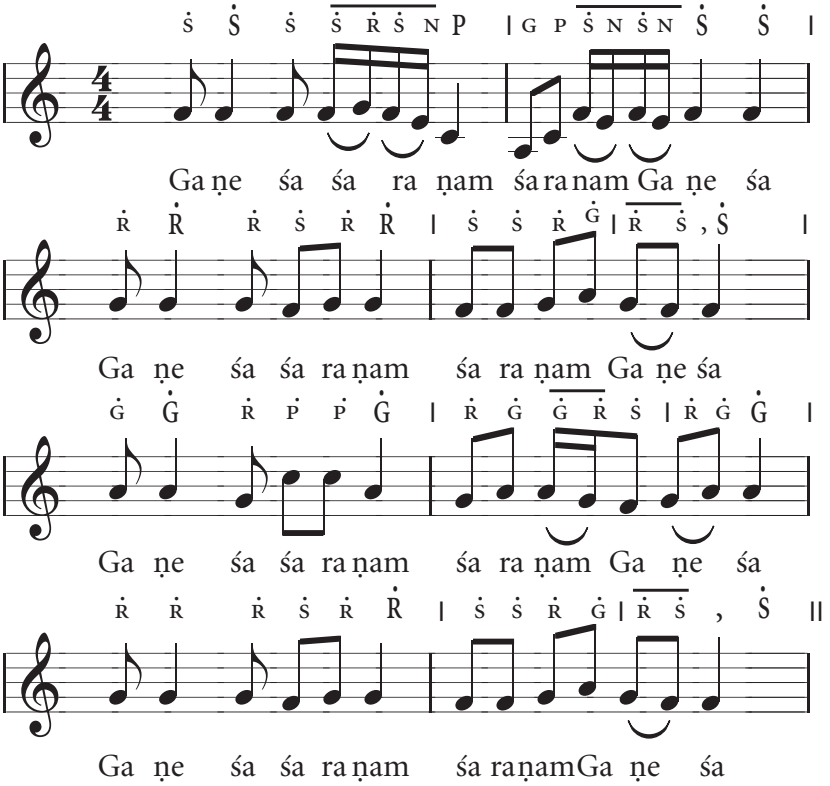
Bhajana means adoration or worship, often by responsive group singing. A leader sings a phrase; the group repeats it exactly. *Bhajanas* usually have a strong rhythm, sometimes slow and steady and then fast, sparking attention, and raising the group energy. *Bhajana* is dynamic japa. The goal is concentrated communion with the God. Three *bhajanas* follow, two from tradition and one from recent times.

GAṆEŚA ŚARAṆAM

"Lord Gaṇeśa, you are my refuge."

Haṁsadhwani Rāga **Ādi Tāla**

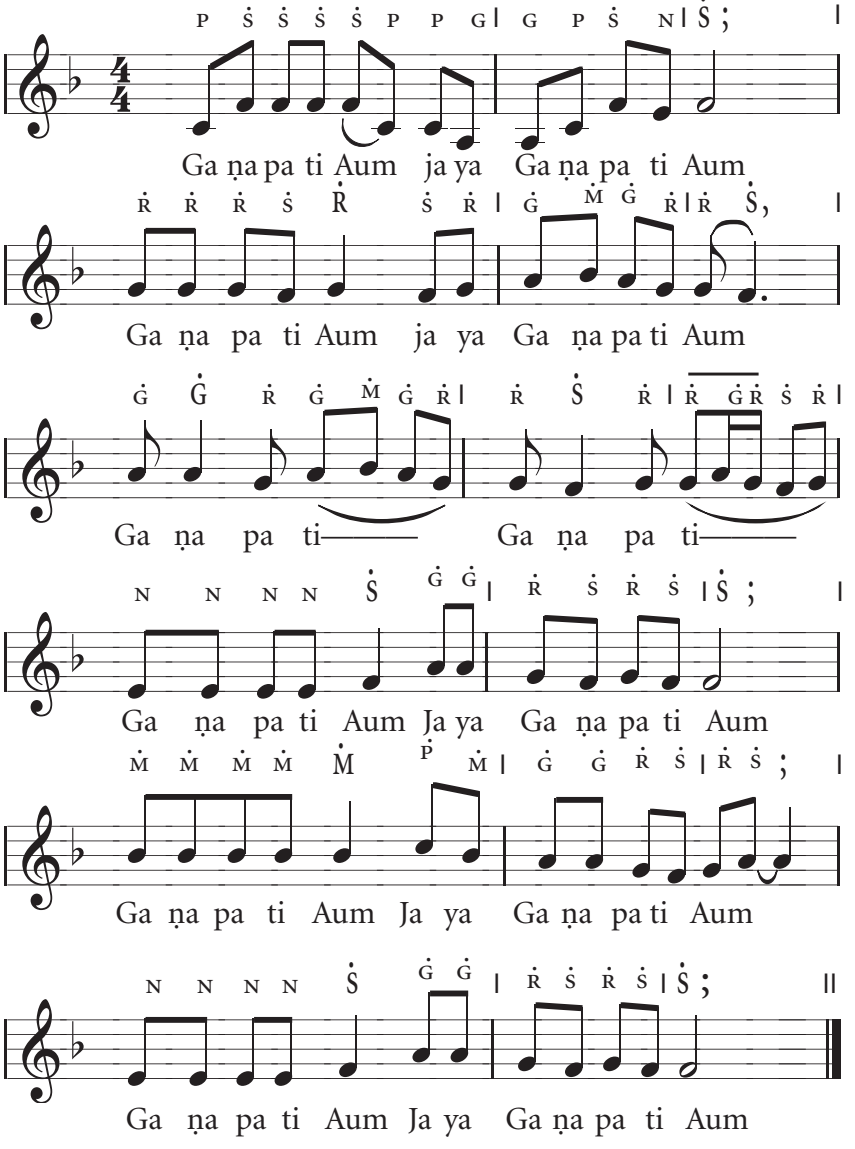
AROHANA: S R_2 G_3 P N_3 Ṡ AVAROHANA: Ṡ N_3 P G_3 R_2 S



JAYA GAṆAPATI AUM

Popular Melody **Ādi Tāla**

"Be Victorious, Gaṇapati!
Lord Gaṇapati, Victory unto Thee!"



PAÑCHAMUKHA GAṆAPATI

This song was inspired by the eight-foot-tall granite statue of Pañchamukha Gaṇapati that we installed on the north shore of Mauritius, the Pearl of the Indian Ocean. This majestic five-faced, ten-armed Gaṇapati looks east toward India over azure blue seas—a towering reminder of the original home of the nation's Hindus and of the importance of harmony in life. The greatest linguist of all time is He who holds time in ten hands, balancing it moment to moment by slightly moving His magnificent trunk. Yes, language is no mystery to our loving Lord. He knows them all. The island's official language, French, and its sweet child Creole are perfect mediums for bhajana. All Creole vernaculars of the world are dear to His ears. They are languages of the heart.

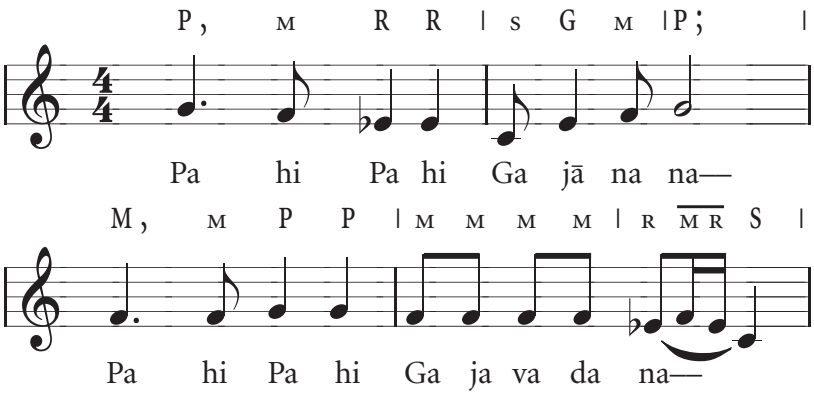
verses: O Five-faced Lord of Gaṇas, let there be harmony in the family, in society and in all our business affairs. Long live culture and our religion. Grant us love of God and charity for all.

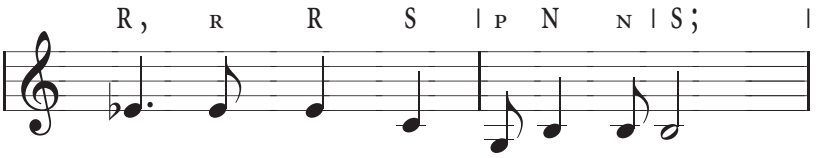
refrain: O Elephant-Lord, protect and heal us.

INVOCATION DE CINQ GAṆEŚA ŚAKTIS

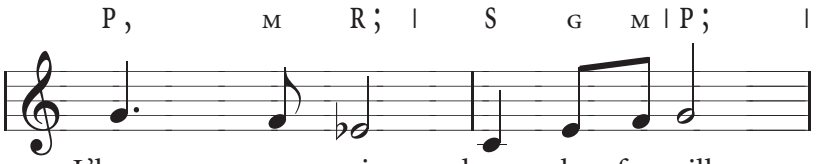
Nattai Rāga **Ādi Tāla**

AROHANA: S G_3 M_1 P N_3 Ṡ AVAROHANA: Ṡ N_3 P M_1 G_3 M_1R_3 S

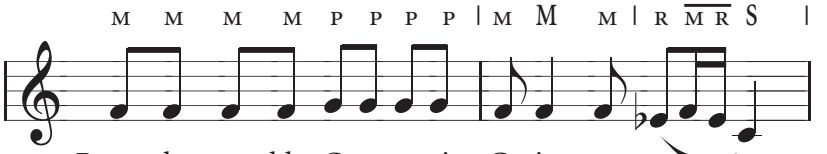




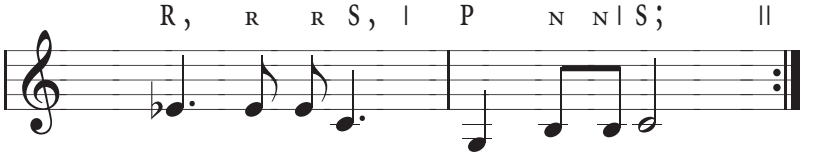
Ra ksha Ra ksha Ga jā na na—



L'har mo nie dans la fa mille
L'har mo nie en so cie te"
L'har mo nie dans les af fairs
Vive la culture et la re li gion
L'amour Di vine et la cha ri te"

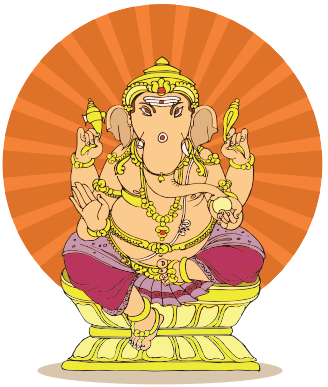


Pañ cha mu kha Gaṇapa ti Ga jā na na
Pañ cha mu kha Gaṇapa ti Gajava da na
Pañ cha mu kha Gaṇapa ti Ga jā na na
Pañ cha mu kha Gaṇapa ti Gajava da na
Pañ cha mu kha Gaṇapa ti Ga jā na na



L'har mo nie dans la fa mille
L'har mo nie en so cie te"
L'har mo nie dans les af fairs
Vive la culture et la re li gion
L'amour Di vine et la cha ri te"

Natchintanai



The venerable sage, Asan Yogaswami of Jaffna, Sri Lanka, sang many songs of God, Gods and his beloved guru which contain profound religious and metaphysical teachings. These songs are called Natchintanai, meaning "good thoughts." In one famous ode to the One God, Śiva, Yogaswami invokes Ganeśa in the first verse, before proceeding to sing of the One. Using traditional images, he alludes to a famous story where Lord Ganeśa gave His grace to Lord Indra, king of the Vedic devas. He also speaks of the ancient mystery teaching that Lord Ganeśa's form is the mantra Aum itself. Thus did Yogaswami affirm the teaching to worship our loving Lord Ganeśa first before beginning any worship or task.

Invocation of the Elephant-Faced Lord

O elephant-faced Lord, son of Śaṅkara
with voluminous belly and earrings, who granted grace to Indra,
the king of the devas. You who are of mantra form I will never forget.

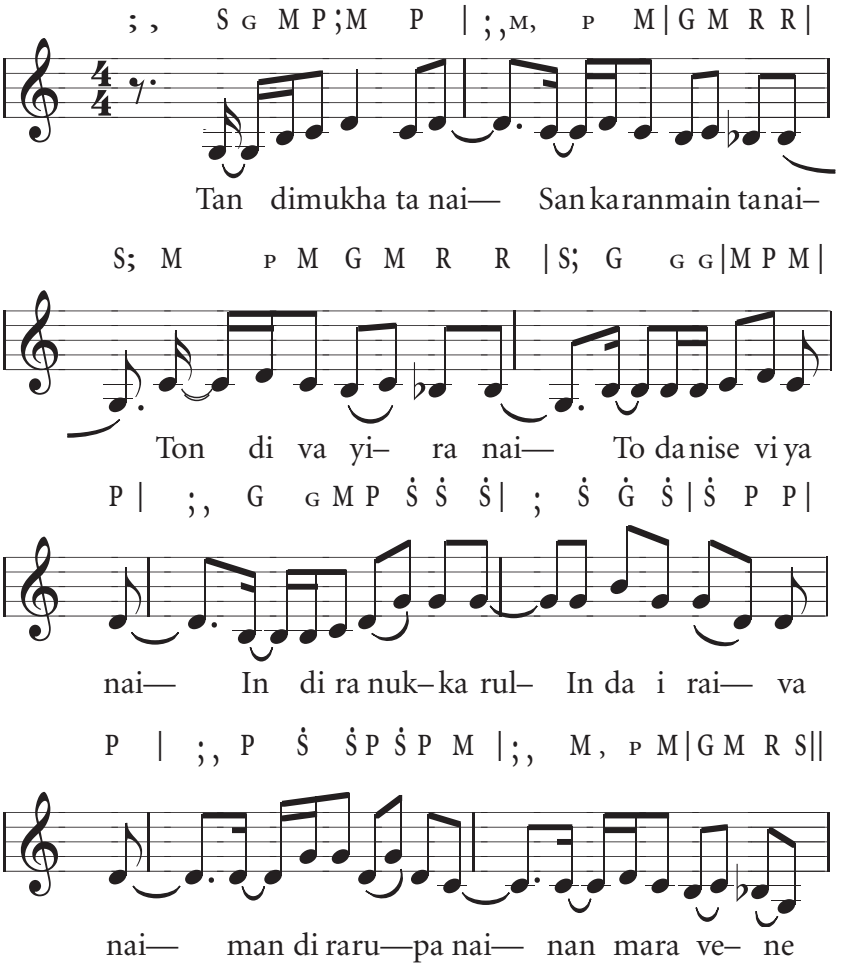
Throughout time, Lord Gaṇeśa as Aum has come into the lives of elemental beings, men, women, children and even the Gods themselves. For His is the office of gatekeeper. Nothing can begin without His nod of approval; and nothing can end without giving thanks and showing appreciation to Him, for every end is a new beginning.

Loving Gaṇeśa has a mystical symbol, the swastika. It represents the power of the matured mind: a mind that has flexibility; a mind that has resilience; a mind that has compassion; a mind that has the twice-born strength to finish what has been begun; a mind that is in touch with the divine—above, below and to either side. The swastika represents Gaṇeśa, to be sure.

TANDI MUKHAN TANAI

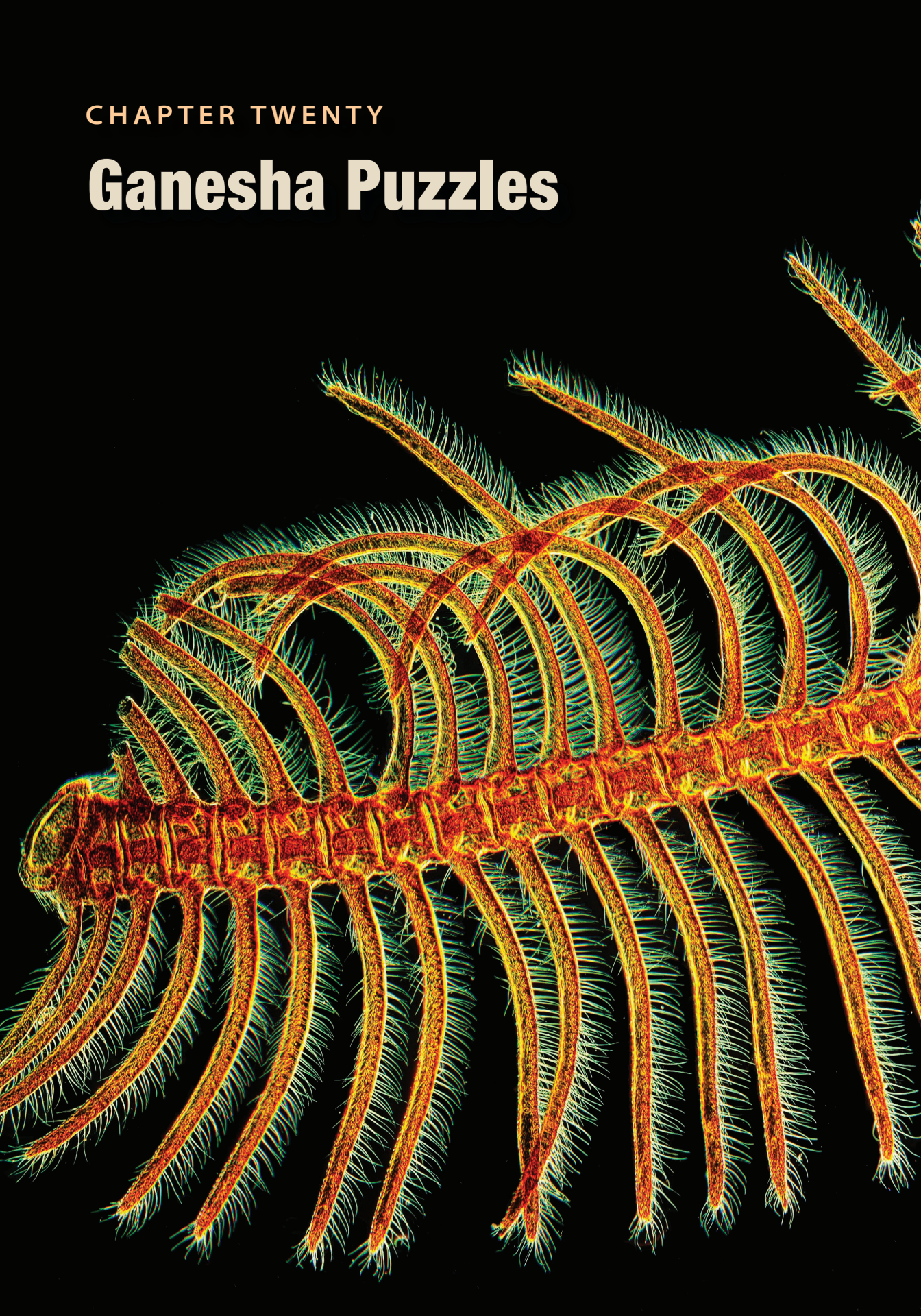
Nattai Rāga **Ādi Tāla**

AROHANA: S G_3 M_1 P N_3 Ṡ AVAROHANA: Ṡ N_3 P M_1 G_3 M_1R_3 S



CHAPTER TWENTY

Ganesha Puzzles



Silk Moth Antenna, David Linstead

Gaṇeśa Puzzles

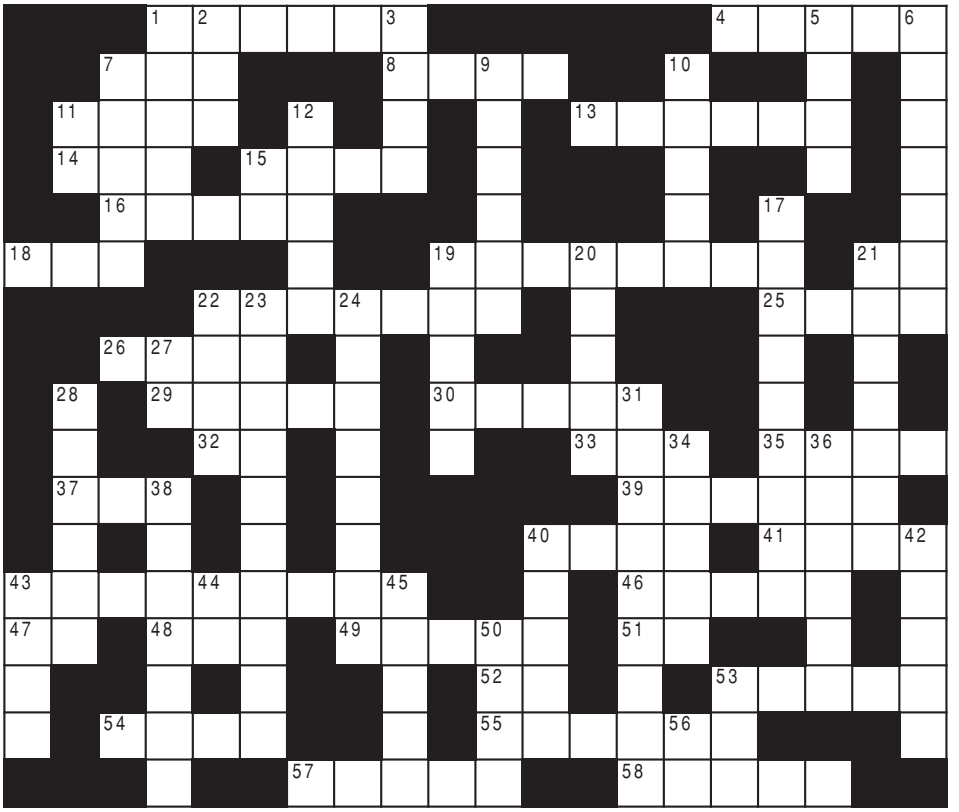
Gaṇeśa Prahelikāḥ

गनेशप्रहेलिकाः

THE PLAYFUL, POWERFUL CHILD OF UMĀ IS BĀLA GAṆEŚA, ONE OF LORD Gaṇeśa's favorite forms. Here we venture a few forays into the world of high-minded fun and wordful frolic. Enjoy. This is playful *svadhyāya. Svadhyāya* is a key concept in Hinduism, one of the classical *yamas,* or cardinal guidelines of conduct, expounded by the ancient Nātha Ṛishi Patañjali and others. It is the deliberate focused activity of self-upliftment through scriptural study, memorization of holy verses, reading elevating tales of spiritual giants and listening to religious discourses. We use our time involving the mind and intellect in pursuits that lead us onward toward the goal of moksha, rather than dispersing consciousness through pointless ramification. But it need not be all so serious. For children and youthful minds, play can also be *svadhyāya*—recreation that fills the mind with religious impressions. Hindu art and culture overflows with an unsurpassed richness of spiritual play. This chapter is a small contribution to that vast river of dharma's fun and games.

Lord Gaṇeśa rules the *mūlādhāra,* the chakra of memory. Yogic insight shows that memorization of spiritual teachings, chants and concepts, a seemingly mere rote process, in fact works a transformation of the energies of the *mūlādhāra.* We actively remold the contents of the subconscious, refining the nature, sublimating and transmuting instinctive energies. May these few games invoke and indelibly stamp upon our minds the great teachings and culture of dharma held in the mind of our beloved Lord Gaṇeśa. Seers say even heavenly devas delight in word play of a spiritual nature.

The Puzzle of the Guardian of Bhārat



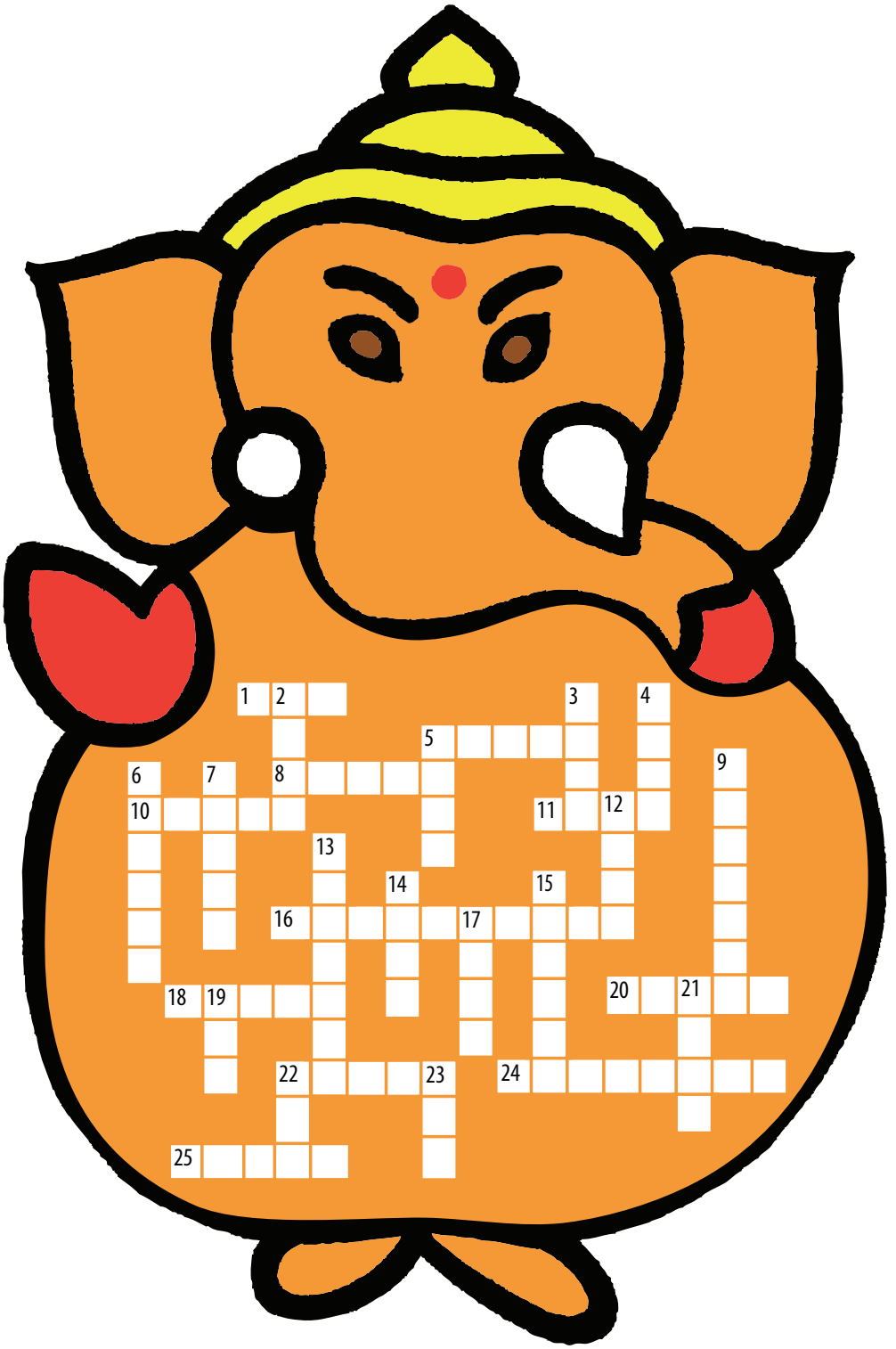
Across

1. Sacred syllables chanted by Hindus.
4. The chakra that Gaṇeśa sits upon is a four-petalled _____ .
7. Gaṇeśa's vāhana (vehicle)
8. Gaṇeśa is full of _____.
11. _____ fields are sacred to Lord Gaṇeśa.
13. Gaṇeśa is sometimes called the Lord of _____.
14. Gaṇeśa is very ____.
15. Gaṇeśa has four _____.
16. Gaṇeśa uses a _____ and a goad to help him do his work.
18. Divine servant. Used at the end of a devotee's name.
19. What you say to Gaṇeśa when he answers your prayer.
21. A Śiva temple facing ___ is a fire-temple (abbreviation).
22. The God we always worship first.
25. Hindus pray to Gaṇeśa to ___ them in good and happy ways.
26. Gaṇeśa loves all the animals in all the _____ in the world.
29. Gaṇeśa works slowly and patiently, never in _____.
30. The Gaṅgā is a sacred _____ to all Hindus.
31. Twice.
33. Hindus worship Gaṇeśa with ___ and yellow flowers.
35. Another name for Vishṇu.
37. Gaṇeśa is even brighter than the ____.

39. Gaṇeśa's favorite sweet.
40. _____ gather honey from flowers.
41. Gaṇeśa always makes careful decisions, never a ____ decision.
43. Kailāsa is in the Himālayan _____.
46. The lower instinctive mind, seat of desire and governor of sensory and motor organs.
47. Gaṇeśa pujās start as early as 3:00 __ in the morning.
48. Gaṇeśa is Lord Śiva's eldest ____.
49. Indian variety of basil often used for japa beads.
51. Having two.
52. First two letters of the number of most famous Gaṇeśa temples in Maharashtra.
53. Kolam designs are _____ on the floor in front of Gaṇeśa shrines.
54. Gaṇeśa pujās fill you with ____.
55. Gaṇeśa's _____ flows through our minds and all form.
57. Indian women wear _____.
58. Incense has a beautiful _____.

Down

1. The fruit Gaṇeśa won in a contest with his brother.
2. Gaṇeśa ___ too many modaka balls one day.
3. Gifts to the poor and crippled.
5. Devotees who are having a special Gaṇeśa archana often carry their offerings on a _____.
6. Gaṇeśa _____ the Mahābhārata with one of his tusks.
7. The monsoons of Southeast Asia bring severe tropical _____.
9. The traditional Hindu wedding is called a _____ ceremony.
10. Just looking at the mūrti of Gaṇeśa makes you feel _____.
11. First and last letters of bean pod that tastes like chocolate.
12. Cane fields are _____.
15. Gaṇeśa is known __ the Lord of Obstacles.
17. The big chakra that Gaṇeśa sits upon deep in the microcosm.
19. Lord Gaṇeśa lives in the _____ World.
20. Gaṇeśa _____ forgets the prayers of His close devotees.
21. Hindu holy scriptures in Sanskrit.
22. The weapon Gaṇeśa uses to knock obstacles out of our path and spur us onward.
23. A big word for "help."
24. Gaṇeśa has the head of an _____.
27. An expression of surprise.
28. Gaṇeśa always knows how to answer our prayers just right because His _____ is so vast.
31. Gaṇeśa's memory is so great He _____ things that happened millions of years ago.
34. Indian thin flour pancake.
36. The subtle inner ethers.
38. When Murugan tried to win the contest with His brother, He flew around the world _____.
40. Gaṇeśa's _____ is bigger than any computer in the world.
42. The nāgaswara and conch are two types of temple _____.
43. Lord Gaṇeśa is a ____ deva.
44. The first two letters of the first digit on your foot.
45. Gaṇeśa likes a lot of _____ in His sweet goodies.
50. Even though Gaṇeśa has little eyes, He still ____ everything.
53. Many different organic substances are used to ___ the beautifully colored Indian fabrics.
56. The first initial of Śiva's two sons.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The Puzzle of the Lord of Massive Girth

[Mahā Clue for this whole puzzle: All words are Sanskrit.]

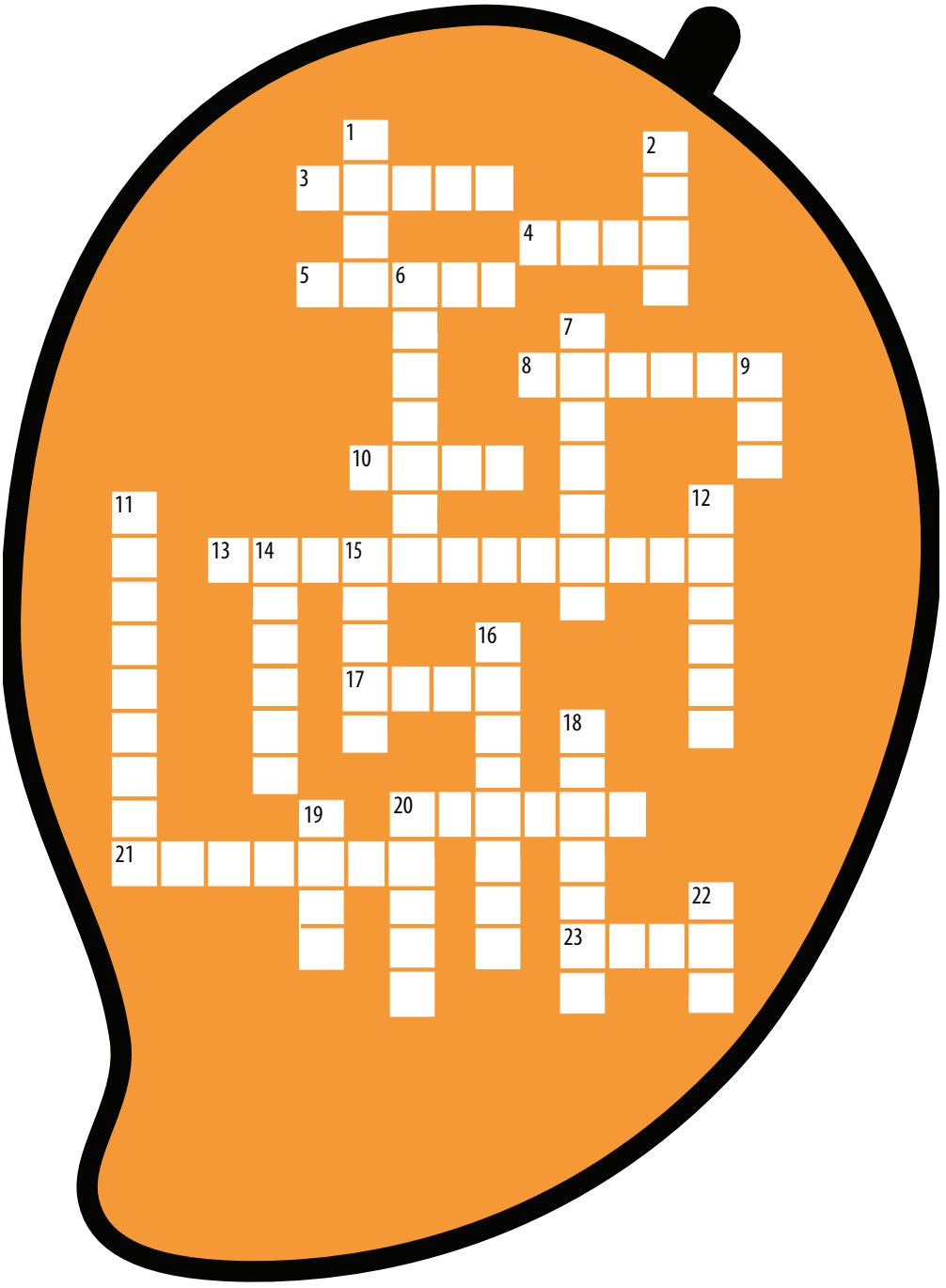
Across

1. Lord Gaṇeśa's seed mantra.
5. Good karma, righteous action, merit.
8. Eternal, something which should be done without fail always at the right time.
10. The second goal of human existence, wealth.
11. The first goal of human existence, love, pleasure.
16. "Demon place." Hindu concept of hell; lower realm of the Second World in which souls temporarily experience self-created hellish states of mind.
18. What you are when you always follow dharma. A person good enough to go to the temple and do pūjā.
20. Our most important scriptures.
22. The inert, dark, heavy, dull, ignorant quality of nature.
24. A hall, generally in a temple or monastery.
25. Same as moksha.

Down

2. The third-eye chakra.
3. Spiritual practice of devotedly repeating a mantra, generally a specified number of daily repetitions while counting on a mālā.
4. A name of Supreme God as "The Auspicious One."
5. Bad karma, sin, wrong-doing.
6. A pot of water on which a husked coconut is nested on five mango leaves.
7. The soul.
9. Lord Gaṇeśa's vāhana, the mouse, traditionally associated with abundance.
12. Delusion, fascination with and attachment to material existence.
13. Individual or group singing of devotional songs, hymns.
14. Rosary for performing japa, recitation of holy names.
15. A round sweet goody made of rice, coconut, sugar, etc. Esoterically, it corresponds to siddhi (attainment or fulfillment) the gladdening fulfillment of pure joy.
17. The Deity of fire.
19. The Primal Sound.
21. The name of the light that is waved during pūjā.
22. That, pure Being.
23. Immanent Truth.

The Puzzle of the Fruit of Truth



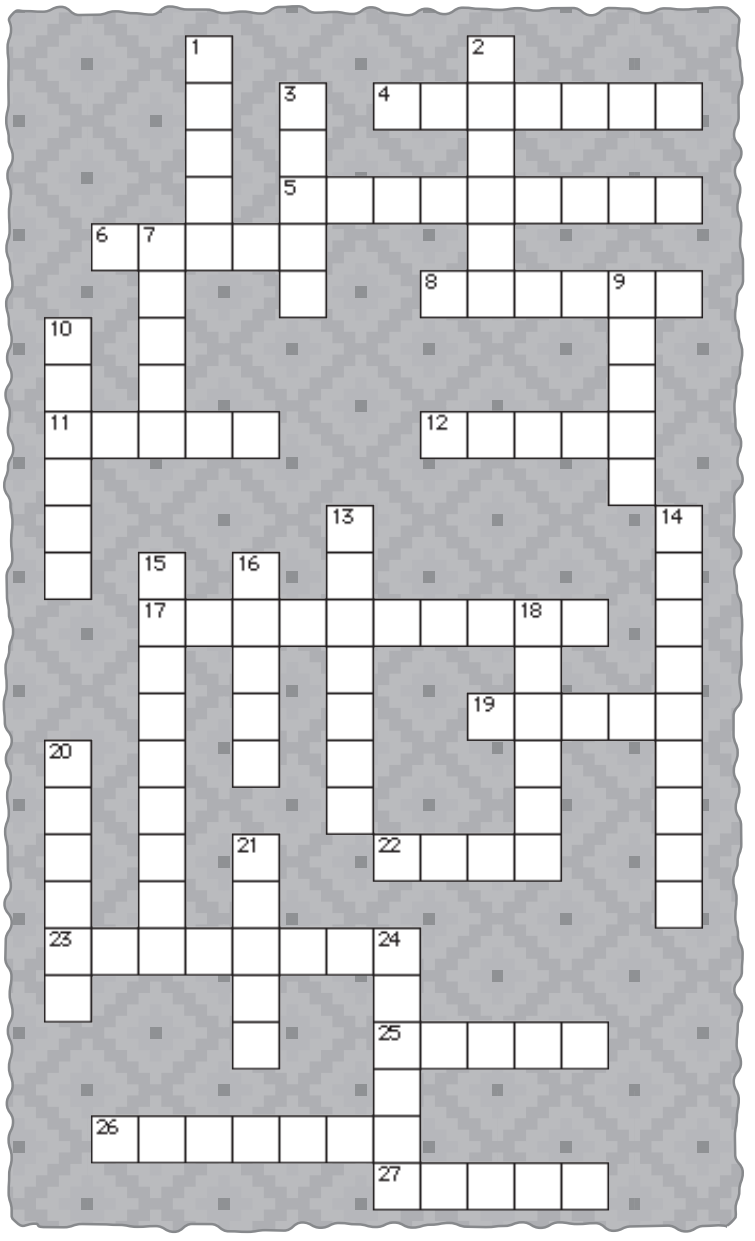
Across

3. Same as moksha.
4. Merging the individual mind with the universal mind of God within.
5. Peace.
8. A Mahādeva, or great God, created by Lord Śiva to assist souls in their evolution. The elephant-faced Patron of Art and Science, first son of Śiva, Remover of Obstacles.
10. Teacher, guide, remover of darkness.
13. Loving Gaṇeśa holds a sprig of this wish-fulfilling tree to tell us that all our wishes will be gratified. We have but to tell Him our needs, that is all, just tell Him.
17. Loving Gaṇeśa has this snake as His pet. Many are afraid of such creatures, but He tells us that it is the kuṇḍalinī within all and each one can rise above all adversity.
20. Symbolic hand gestures used in pūjā, dance and haṭha yoga.
21. Dedicated striving and practice.
23. A stringed instrument with two round dried gourds on the ends, that makes heavenly music.

Down

1. A period of time that spans many ages.
2. Loving Gaṇeśa uses this instrument to prod the lazy ahead in their birth karmas whenever they tarry.
6. "Without qualities." Refers to the Absolute God, Paraśiva or Parabrahman.
7. "Accomplished or skillful one." Someone who is dedicated to spiritual practices is usually celibate, wears white and is not a sannyāsin.
9. Loving Gaṇeśa knows there are difficult times ahead for some of His devotees. He protects them with this implement in gentle ways from evils they have attracted.
11. Householder; family man or woman. The period of human life after brahmacharya, or studentship, is over, the individual establishing of a career, home and family.
12. The calm, quiescent, peaceful, still quality of nature.
14. A word meaning "of the stars." Anything in the subtle non-physical dimension of the Second World.
15. Primal life force of the breath.
16. "Great Deva" or "Great Shining One." A name of Śiva.
18. The symbol and mantra denoting God and the Primal Sound.
19. Loving Gaṇeśa uses this implement to cast karmas back on devotees for resolution, never letting up until completion.
20. Loving Gaṇeśa tells of this fruit: "It was given to Me from Lord Śiva's own hand after performing My first wisdom act. It represents the highest spiritual fruition."
22. It's hot in summertime, so Loving Gaṇeśa sits whisking away the past within the minds of devotees with this cooling device.

The Puzzle of the Lord of Spiritual Mysteries



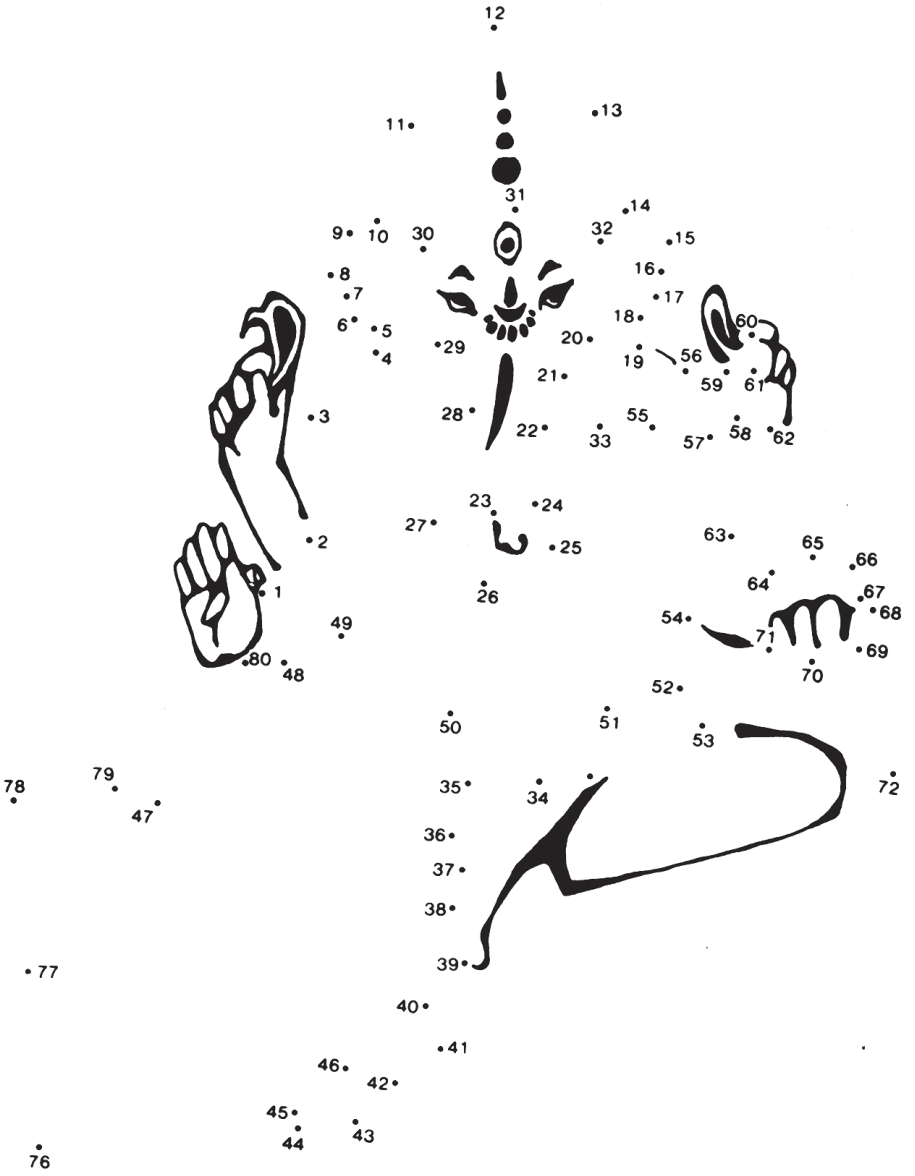
Across

4. Faith.
5. Loving Gaṇeśa, like His brother Murugan, holds this great power. It flashes in the sky during storms, spirit over mind, mind over matter.
6. "A "not spiritual" being living in the Second World on the lower astral plane, sometimes called a "demon."
8. The animal that each Hindu God is depicted as riding on, symbolic of a function of the God.
11. "God." Can refer to the image or mūrti installed in a temple or to the Mahādeva whom the murthi represents.
12. A troop of devas, especially used in reference to Lord Śiva's attendants under Lord Gaṇeśa's supervision.
17. The last portion of the *Vedas*. They teach philosophy through people asking questions and wise ṛishis' giving answers.
19. Loving Gaṇeśa broke this, His beautiful right tusk in a sacrificial act, using it as a stylus to get the job done. By this act He demonstrates that what we begin we must finish.
22. Inner plane being of light.
23. The ancient Hindu symbol of auspiciousness and good fortune. A square cross with broken arms.
25. The fiery, restless quality of nature.
26. A sweet nut from a palm tree hard as a rock, but soft and white inside.
27. What He shoots from his bow.

Down

1. Small circle of red powder (kuṅkuma) placed between and just above the eyebrows. It symbolizes the opening of the third eye, seeing with superconscious soul vision.
2. Loving Gaṇeśa edits all these scriptures on this and other planets.
3. Sacred art of "drawing" intricate decorative patterns at the entrance to a home or temple or at ceremonial sites with the rice powder or colored powdered pulses.
7. Hinduism's revealed scriptures.
9. Loving Gaṇeśa uses this rope-like device to draw close those He loves and save strayed ones in extraordinary ways.
10. Spiritual attainment or power, superconscious abilities, fulfillment.
13. Triple-pointed lance representing Śiva's three-in-one power: Love, Wisdom and Action.
14. Loving Gaṇeśa sits at Lord Śiva's holy feet with japa mālā made of these seeds.
15. The chakra located at the base of the spine and governing memory, time and space where Loving Gaṇeśa sits inside each person.
16. Sanskrit word meaning "deed or act;" the principle of cause and effect. Also, the totality of our actions and their concomitant reactions in this and all previous lives.
18. Divine law; the law of being; the way of righteousness or "that which holds one's true nature."
20. Loving Gaṇeśa makes us grow healthy food by the desire for this simple underground vegetable.
21. Loving Gaṇeśa wants us to be like this flower that "comes from the depths of the mud opening into the bud high above the water's edge."
24. The nectar of immortality that Loving Gaṇeśa keeps in his pot.

The Lord Who Is Hidden in All Things



Solution for the Guardian of Bharat

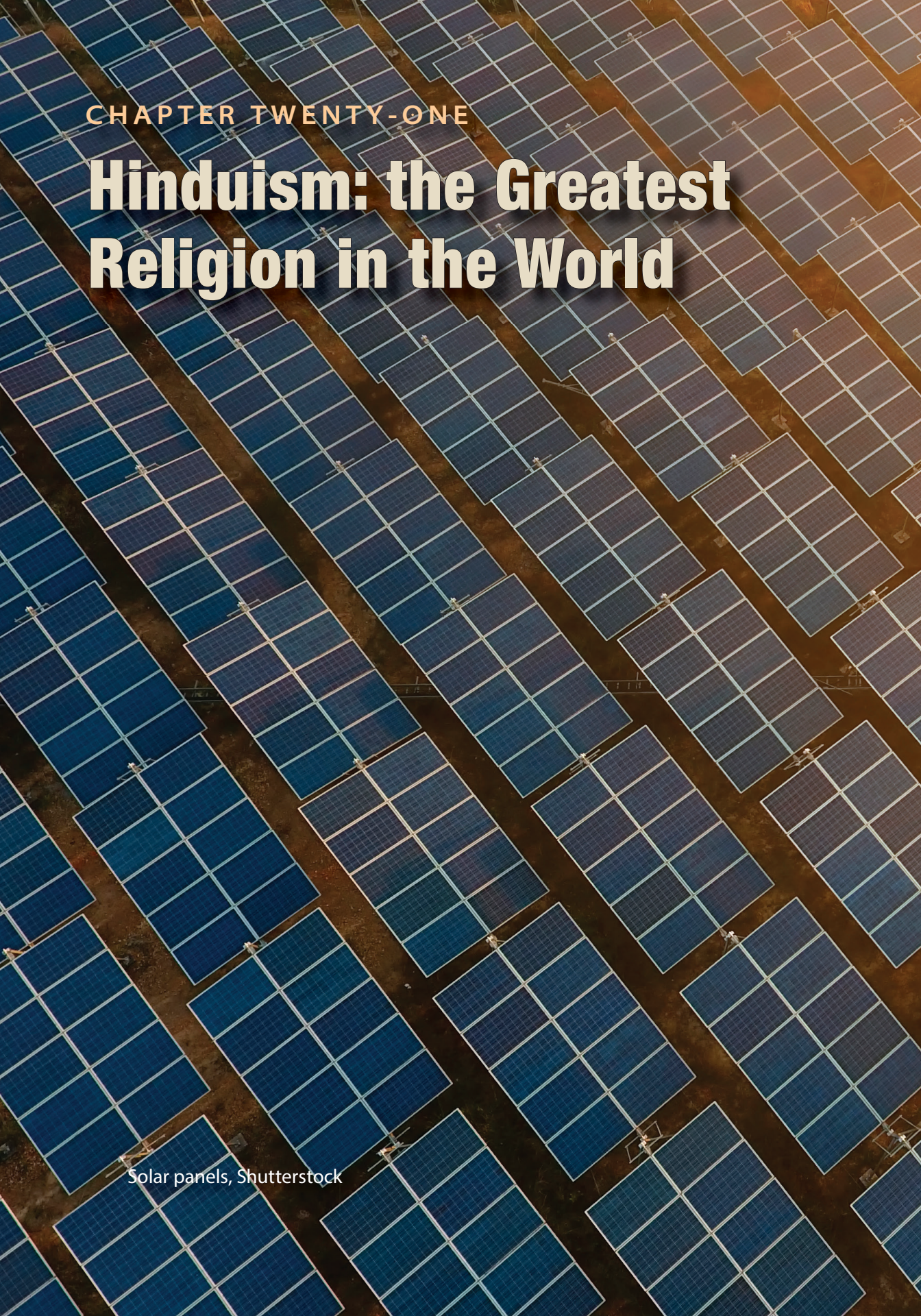
Solution for the Puzzle of Dharma

Solution for the Fruit of Truth

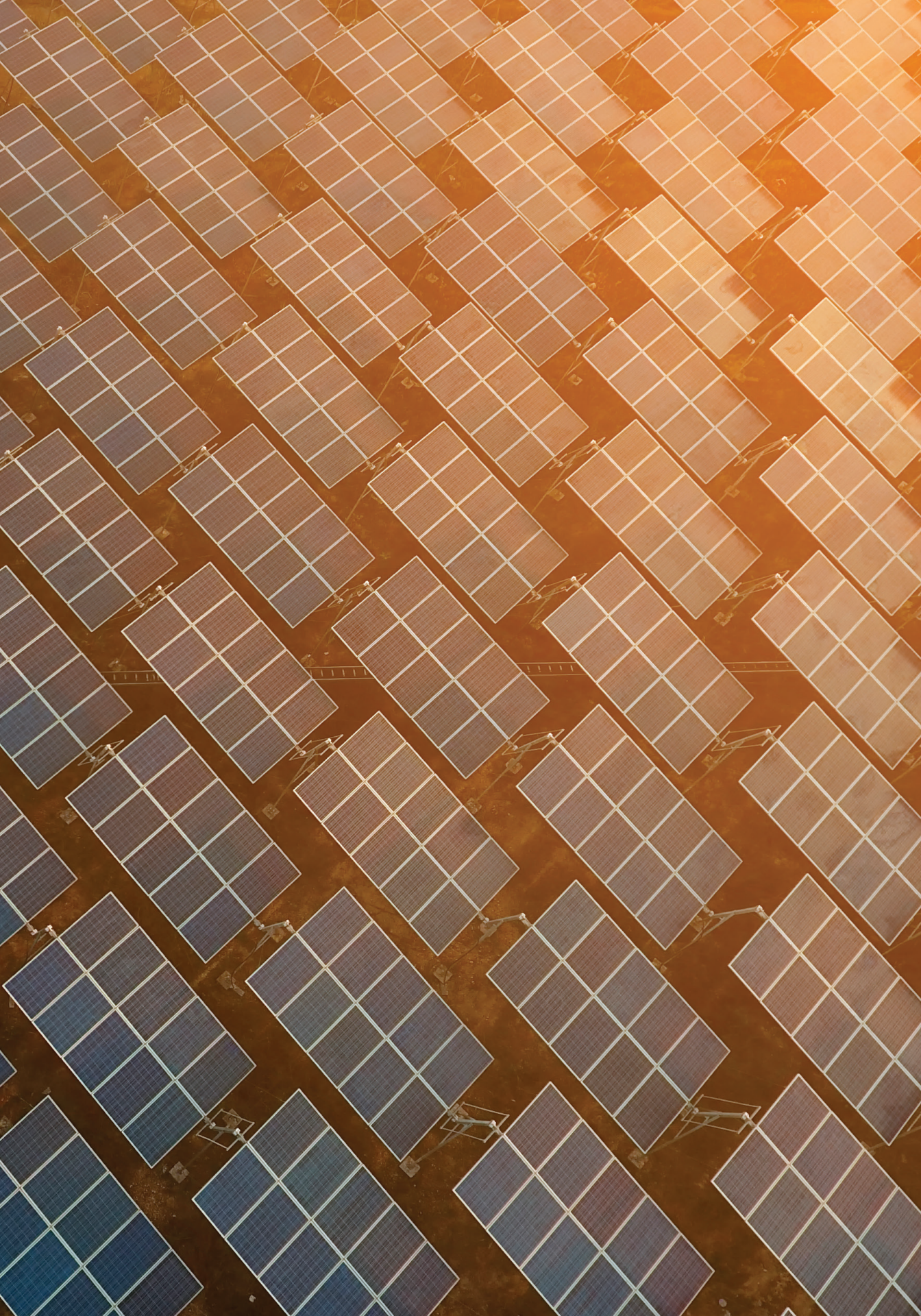
Solution for the Lord of Mysteries

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Hinduism: the Greatest Religion in the World



Solar panels, Shutterstock



EXOTIC INDIA: KAILAS RAJ

Hinduism: the Greatest Religion in the World

Hindudharmo Mahattamo Viśvadharmaḥ

हिन्दुधर्मो महत्तमो विश्वधर्मः

NDOUBTEDLY, RELIGION IS MAN'S ASSOCIATION WITH THE DIVINE, AND the ultimate objective of religion is realization of Truth. Forms which symbolize Truth are only indications; they are not Truth itself, which transcends all conceptualization. The mind in its efforts to understand Truth through reasoning must always fail, for Truth transcends the very mind which seeks to embrace it.

Hinduism is unique among the world's religions. I boldly proclaim it the greatest religion in the world. To begin with, it is mankind's oldest spiritual declaration, the very fountainhead of faith on the planet. Hinduism's venerable age has seasoned it to maturity. It is the only religion, to my knowledge, which is not founded in a single historic event or prophet, but which itself precedes recorded history. Hinduism has been called the "cradle of spirituality," and the "mother of all religions," partially because it has influenced virtually every major religion and partly because it can absorb all other religions, honor and embrace their scriptures, their saints, their philosophy. This is possible because Hinduism looks compassionately on all genuine spiritual effort and knows unmistakably that all souls are evolving toward union with the Divine, and all are destined, without exception, to achieve spiritual enlightenment and liberation in this or a future life.

Of course, any religion in the world is a mind stratum within people, isn't it? It is a group of people who think consciously, subconsciously and subsuperconsciously alike and who are guided by their own superconsciousness and the superconsciousness of their leaders which make up the force field which we call a religion. It does not exist outside the mind. People of a certain religion have all been impressed with the same experiences. They have all accepted the same or similar beliefs and attitudes, and their mutual concurrence creates the bonds of fellowship and purpose, of doctrine and communion.

The people who *are* Hinduism share a mind structure. They can understand, acknowledge, accept and love the peoples of all religions, encompass them within their mind as being fine religious people. The Hindu truly believes that there is a single Eternal Path, but he does not believe that any one religion

is the only valid religion or the only religion that will lead the soul to salvation. Rather, the Eternal Path is seen reflected in all religions.

To put it another way, the will of God or the Gods is at work in all genuine worship and service. It is said in Hindu scripture that "Truth is one. Paths are many." The search for Truth, for God, is called the Sanātana Dharma, or the Eternal Path, because it is inherent in the soul itself, where religion begins. This path, this return to the Source, is ever existent in man, and is at work whether he is aware of the processes or not. There is not this man's search and that man's search. Where does the impetus come from? It comes from the inside of man himself. Thus, Hinduism is ever vibrant and alive, for it depends on this original source of inspiration, this first impulse of the spirit within, giving it an energy and a vibrancy that is renewable eternally in the now.

Naturally, the Hindu feels that his faith is the broadest, the most practical and effective instrument of spiritual unfoldment, but he includes in his Hindu mind all the religions of the world as expressions of the one Eternal Path and understands each proportionately in accordance with its doctrines and dogma. He knows that certain beliefs and inner attitudes are more conducive to spiritual growth than others, and that all religions are, therefore, not the same. They differ in important ways. Yet, there is no sense whatsoever in Hinduism of an "only path." A devout Hindu is supportive of all efforts that lead to a pure and virtuous life and would consider it unthinkable to dissuade a sincere devotee from his chosen faith. This is the Hindu mind, and this is what we teach, what we practice and what we offer aspirants on the path.

We often send people back to their own religion, for Hindu doctrine would consider it an unseemly karma to draw someone away simply because he believed differently. To the Hindu, conduct and the inner processes of the soul's maturation are more essential than the particular religion one may be by the accidents of birth, culture or geography. The Hindu knows that he might unknowingly disturb the dharma of the individual if he pulls him away from his religious roots, and that would cause an unsavory karma for them both. He knows, too, that it is not necessary that all people believe exactly the same way or call God by the same name.

A Religion of Experience

Still, Hinduism is also extremely sectarian, altogether adamant in its beliefs. Its doctrines of karma and reincarnation, its philosophy of nonviolence and compassion, its certainty of mystical realities and experience and its universality are held with unshakable conviction. Perhaps this is due to the fact that

Hinduism is a religion more of experience than of doctrine. It prefers to say to its followers, "This is the nature of Truth, and these are the means by which that Truth may be realized. Here are the traditions which have withstood time and proved most effective. Now you may test them in your own life, prove them to yourself. And we will help as we can." Hinduism will never say, "You must do or believe thusly or be condemned." In Hinduism it is believed that none is eternally condemned. That loving acceptance and unremitting faith in the goodness of life is another reason I boldly say that Hinduism is the greatest religion in the world.

Within Hinduism, as within every religious system, are the practical means of attaining the purity, the knowledge and the serenity of life. Each Hindu is enjoined to attend a pūjā every day, preferably at a certain and consistent time. He must observe the laws of virtue and the codes of ethics. He must serve others, support religion within his community. He should occasionally pilgrimage to sacred shrines and temples and partake in the sacraments. If he is more advanced, an older soul, then he is expected, expects of himself, to undertake certain forms of *sādhana* and *tapas,* of discipline and asceticism.

Though it is broad and open in the freedom of the mind to inquire, Hinduism is narrowly strict in its expectations of devotees—the more awakened the soul, the higher the demands and responsibilities placed upon him. And though other systems of belief are fully acceptable mind structures within the structure of the higher mind, there is no way out of Hinduism. There is no excommunication. There is no means of severance. There's no leaving Hinduism once you have formally accepted and been accepted. Why is that? That is because Hinduism contains the whole of religion within itself. There is no "other religion" which one can adopt by leaving Hinduism, only other aspects of the one religion which is the sum of them all, the Eternal Path, the Sanātana Dharma.

I would say that, if it lacked all the qualities of open-mindedness and compassion and tolerance just mentioned, Hinduism would be the greatest religion on the basis of its profound mysticism alone. No other faith boasts such a deep and enduring comprehension of the mysteries of existence, or possesses so vast a metaphysical system. The storehouse of religious revelations in Hinduism cannot be reckoned. I know of its equal nowhere. It contains the entire system of yoga, of meditation and contemplation and Self Realization. Nowhere else is there such insightful revelation of the inner bodies of man, the subtle *prāṇas* and the chakras, or psychic centers within the nerve system. Inner states of superconsciousness are explored and mapped fully in Hinduism, from the

clear white light to the sights and sounds which flood the awakened inner consciousness of man. In the West it is the mystically awakened soul who is drawn to Hinduism for understanding of inner states of consciousness, discovering after ardent seeking that Hinduism possesses answers which do not exist elsewhere and is capable of guiding awareness into ever-deepening mind strata.

Hinduism's Unbounded Tolerance

In apparent conflict, the scriptures written thousands of years ago explain how we should live, and saints and ṛishis and seers throughout the ages have told us that it is impossible to live that way. So, Hinduism has a great tolerance for those who strive and a great forgiveness for those who fail. It looks in awe at those who succeed in living a life according to its own strict ethics. In Hinduism, we have many, many saints. You don't have to die to be acknowledged a saint in our religion, you have to live. The Hindus, perhaps beyond all other people on the Earth, realize the difficulties of living in a human body and look in awe at those who achieve true spirituality.

The Hindu believes in reincarnation. He believes that he is not the body in which he lives, but the soul or awareness which takes on a body for a definite purpose. He believes he is going to get a better body in a better birth, that the process does not begin and end in a single life, that the process is continuous, reaching beyond the limits that one life may impose on inner progress. Of course, his belief in karma assures him that a better birth, that progress inwardly will come only if he behaves in a certain way. He knows that if he does not behave according to the natural laws, to the Hindu ethics, that he will suffer for his transgressions in a future life, or future lives, that he may by his own actions earn the necessity of a so-called inferior birth, earn the right to start over where he left off in the birth in which he failed.

The belief in karma and reincarnation is exclusively Hindu, and yet many people in the world today, whether they call themselves religious or not, are coming to the same conclusions, not from being told to believe but in a natural way, from the inside out. This belief in more than a single life brings to the Hindu a great sense of peace. He knows that the maturity of the soul takes many lives, perhaps hundreds of lives. If he is not perfect right now, then at least he knows that he is progressing, that there will be many opportunities for learning and growing. This eliminates anxiety, gives the serene perception that everything is all right as it is. There is no sense of a time limit, of an impending end or an ultimate judgment of his actions and attitudes. This understanding

that the soul evolves gives the Hindu remarkable insight into the human condition and appreciation for all men in all stages of spiritual development.

Hinduism is so broad. Within it there is a place for the insane and a place for the saint. There is a place for the beggar and for those who support beggars. There is a place for the intelligent person and plenty of room for the fool. The beauty of Hinduism is that it does not demand of every soul perfection in this life, a necessary conclusion for those who believe in a single lifetime during which human perfection or grace must be achieved. Belief in reincarnation gives the Hindu an acceptance of every level of humanity. Some souls are simply older souls than others, but all are inherently the same, inherently immortal and of the nature of the Divine.

Hindu Views of the Divine

In Hinduism it is believed that the Gods are living, thinking, dynamic beings who live in a different world, in an inner world in the microcosm within this world in which there exists a greater macrocosm than this visible macrocosm. For the Hindu, surrender to the Divine Will that created and pervades and guides the universe is essential. The Hindu believes that these beings guide our experiences on Earth, actually consciously guide the evolutionary processes. Therefore, he worships these beings as greater beings than himself, and he maintains a subjective attitude toward them, wondering if he is attuned with these grand forces of the universe, if his personal will is in phase with what these great beings would have him do. This gives birth to a great culture, a great attitude, a great tolerance and kindness one to another. It gives rise to humility in the approach to life—not a weak or false humility, but a strong and mature sense of the grand presence and purpose of life before which the head naturally bows.

There are said to be millions of Gods in the Hindu pantheon, though only a few major Deities are actually worshiped in the temples. That God may be worshiped as the Divine Father or a Sainted Mother or the King of kings is one of the blessings of Hinduism. It offers to each a personal and significant contact, and each Hindu will choose that aspect of the Deity which most appeals to his inner needs and sensibilities. That can be confusing to some, but not to the Hindu. Within his religion is monism and dualism, monotheism and polytheism, and a rich array of other theological views.

God in Hinduism is accepted as both transcendent and immanent, both beyond the mind and the very substratum of the mind. The ideal of the Hindu is to think of God always, every moment, and to be ever conscious of God's

presence. This does not mean the transcendent God, the Absolute Lord. That is for the yogī to ponder in his contemplative discipline. That is for the well-perfected Hindu who has worshiped faithfully in the temples, studied deeply the scriptures and found his *satguru.* For most Hindus, *God* means the Gods, one of the many personal devas and Mahādevas which prevail in our religion. This means a personal great soul which may never have known physical birth, a being which pervades the planet, pervades form with His mind and Being, and which guides evolution. Such a God is capable of offering protection and direction to the followers of Hinduism. The Hindu is supposed to think of God every minute of every day, to see God everywhere. Of course, most of us don't think of God even one minute a day. That's the reason that each Hindu is obliged to conduct or attend at least one religious service, one pūjā or ceremony, every day in his temple or home shrine. This turns his mind inward to God and the Gods.

Hinduism, Sanātana Dharma, is an Eastern religion, and the Eastern religions are very different from those of the West. For one thing, they are more introspective. Hinduism gave birth to Buddhism, for Buddha was born and died a good Hindu. And it gave birth to other religions of the East, to Taoism, to Jainism, to Sikhism and others.

Three Pillars: Temples, Philosophy and Preceptors

There are three distinct aspects of Hinduism: the temples, the philosophy and the *satguru.* It is very fortunate that in the last two decades Hindu temples have nearly circumferenced the world. There are temples in Europe, in North America, in South America, Australia, in Africa and throughout Southeast Asia. The Hindu temple and stone images in it work as a channel for the Deity, for the Gods who hover over the stone image and in their subtle etheric forms change people's lives through changing the nerve currents within them through their *darśana.* People come to a sanctified temple and go away, and in that process they are slowly changed from the inside out. They have changed because their very life force has changed, their mind has been changed and their emotions have undergone a subtle transformation. The temples of Hinduism are magnificent in their immensity and in their ability to canalize the three worlds, the First World of physical, outer existence and the inner Second and Third Worlds.

Hindu temples are not centered around a priest or minister, though there may be a holy man associated with a temple whose advice is cautiously and quietly sought. There is no sermon, no mediator, no director to guide the wor-

ship of pilgrims. The temple is the home of the Deities, and each devotee goes according to his own timing and for his own particular needs. Some may go to weep and seek consolation in times of sorrow, while simultaneously others will be there to rejoice in their good fortune and to sing God's name in thanksgiving. Naturally, the sacraments of name-giving and marriage and so forth are closely associated with the temple. One has only to attend a Hindu temple during festival days to capture the great energy and vitality of this ancient religion.

In its second section, philosophy, Hinduism has influenced the deep religious thinkers of all cultures through known history. There is not a single philosophy which can be labeled "Hinduism." Rather, it is a network of many philosophies, some seeming to impertinently contradict the validity of others, yet on deeper reflection are seen as integral aspects of a single radiant mind flow. In the area of philosophy must be included the enormous array of scripture, hymns, mantras, devotional *bhajana* and philosophical texts which are certainly unequaled in the world.

In the natural order of things, temple worship precedes philosophy. It all starts with the temple, with this sacred house of the Deities, this sanctified site where the three worlds communicate, where the inner and outer mesh and merge. It is there that devotees change. They become more like the perfect beings that live in the temple, become the voice of the Deity, writing down what is taught them from the inside; and their writings, if they are faithful to the superconscious message of the God, become scripture and make up the philosophies of Hinduism. The philosophies then stand alone as the voice of the religion. They are taught in the universities, discussed among scholars, meditated upon by yogīs and devout seekers. It is possible to be a good Hindu by only learning the philosophy and never going to the temple, or by simply going to the temple and never hearing of the deeper philosophies.

Hinduism has still another section within it, and that is the guru—the teacher, the illuminator, the spiritual preceptor. The guru is the remover of darkness. He is one who knows the philosophy, who knows the inner workings of the temple, and who in himself is the philosopher and the temple. The guru is he who can enliven the spirit within people. Like the temple and the philosophy, he stands alone, apart from the institutions of learning, apart from sites of pilgrimage. He is himself the source of knowledge, and he is himself the pilgrim's destination.

Should all the temples be destroyed, they would spring up again from the seeds of philosophy, or from the presence of a realized man. And if all the

SHRIKANT DAMODAR PANDIT

scriptures and philosophical treatises were burned, they would be written again from the same source. So Hinduism cannot be destroyed. It can never be destroyed. It exists as the spirit of religion within each being. Its three aspects, the temple, the philosophy and the satguru, individually proficient, taken together make Hinduism the most vital and abundant religion in the world.

Hinduism's Fathomless Diversity

Hinduism has a grand diversity among its many sects. That diversity is itself a strength, showing how broad and encompassing Hinduism is. It does not seek to have all devotees believe exactly alike. In fact, it has no central authority, no single organized institution which could ever proclaim or enforce such sameness. There is an immense inner unity, but the real strength and wisdom of Hinduism is its diversity, its variety. There are so many sects within

Hinduism that you could spend a lifetime studying them and never begin to assess them all. More is there than any single human being could assimilate in a single lifetime. Hinduism, therefore, has the magnetism to draw us back into its immensity life after life. Each sect may be said to be a full religion in its own right, with all the increments of faith, with no necessary part missing. Therefore, each sect works for the individuals within it completely, and each tolerates all the other sects. It does not totally divorce itself from the other sects, denying their beliefs, but simply separates to stress or expound a limited area of the vast philosophy, apart from all others, to be understood by the limited faculties of man.

These various sects and divisions within Hinduism all spring from a one source. Most Hindus believe in the transcendental God as well as the personal Lord or God, and yet there is within the boundaries of the faith room for the non-believer, for the atheist or for the agnostic who is assessing and developing his beliefs. This brings another unique asset to our religion—the absence of heresy. There is no such thing as a heretic in Hinduism, for there is no single right perspective or belief. Doctrine and *sādhana* are not considered absolutes, but the means to an absolute end, and they can be tailored to individual needs and natures. My satguru would say that different prescriptions are required for different ailments.

In Hinduism there is no person or spiritual authority who stands between man and God. In fact, Hinduism teaches just the opposite. The priests in the temples are the servants of the Deity, the helper, the keeper of the Gods' house. He prepares and purifies the atmosphere of the temple, but he does not intervene between the devotee and his God—whichever of the many Gods within our religion that he may be worshiping. Without a mediator, responsibility is placed fully upon the individual. There is no one to intercede on his behalf. He is responsible for his actions, for his thoughts, for his emotions, for his relationship with his God. He must work out his beliefs from the inside without undue dependence upon external influences. Of course, there is much help, as much as may be needed, from those who have previously gone through what he is now going through. It is not enough that he adopts an authorized dogma. He must study and bring the teachings to life from within himself.

Within the philosophy, each philosopher proclaims that God can be found within man if man practices the proper precepts of yoga and delves within himself through his kuṇḍalinī force. The guru himself teaches the awakening of that force and how God can be realized in His transcendental as well as His

personal aspect within the sphere of one's own personal experience in this very lifetime if he but pursues the path and is obedient.

Hinduism is unique because God and man, mind and God, instinctive mind, intellectual mind and superconscious mind, can merge as one, according to the evolution of the individual. Each one, according to his own self-created karma, has his own fulfillment. Those in the first stages ofevolution, whose interests and experiences are basically instinctive, who possess little intellect or mental prowess, are guided by their emotions and impulses, are generally fearful. They have a personal experience of the Deity in the temple, but it is generally a fearful experience. They are afraid of God. Alongside of them during a pūjā is a great ṛishi who has had many hundreds of lives on this planet. He has his own personal experience of God, but it is an experience of love, of oneness and of union. There they are, side by side. Each experience of God is as real to one as to the other. There is no one in-between, no arbitrator of the experience to compel the one to see God exactly as the other one does.

Within Hinduism Is a Place for Everyone

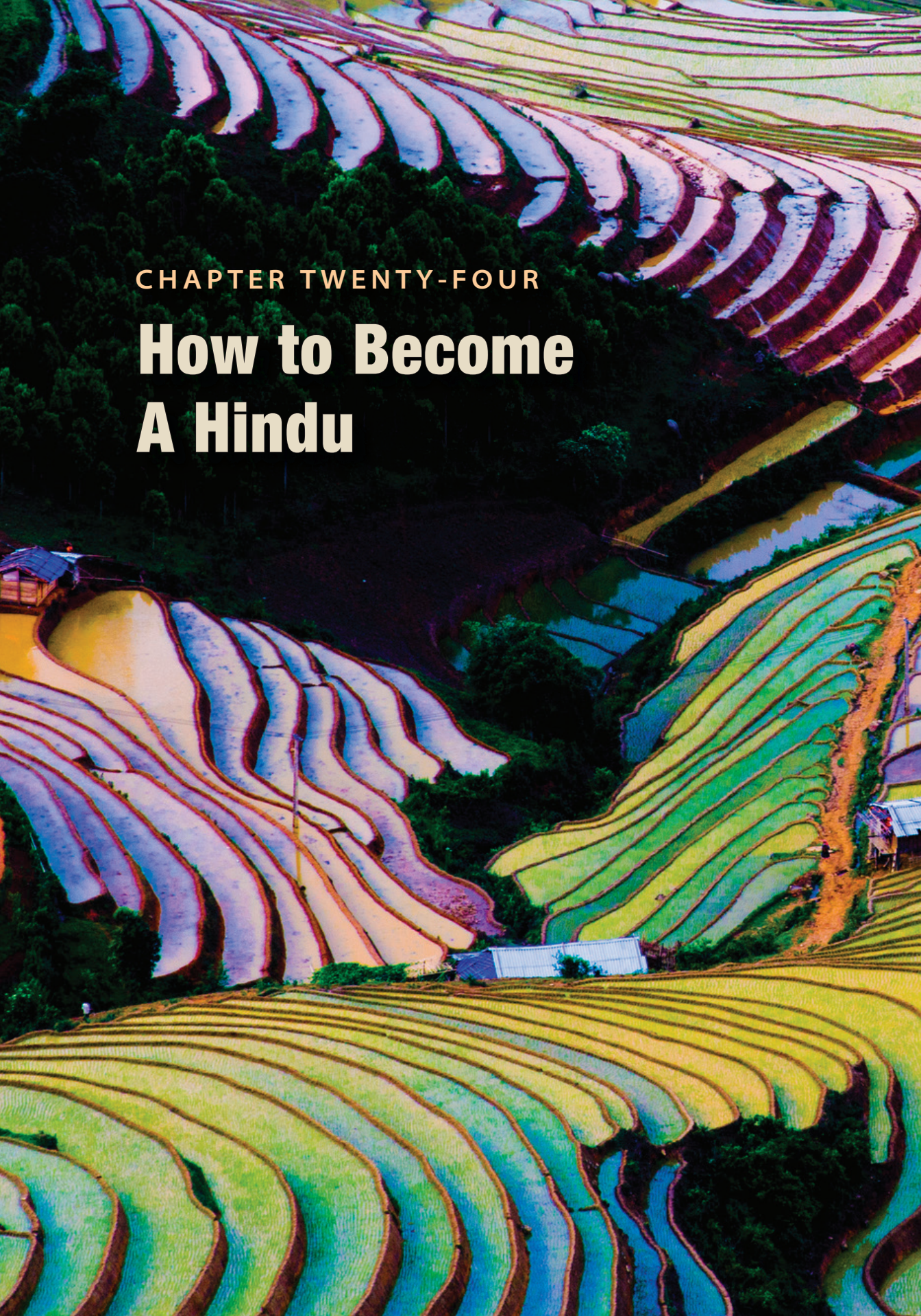
Hinduism is as broad as humanity is, as diverse as people are diverse. It is for the rich and the poor, for the mystic and the materialist. It is for the sage and the fool. None is excluded. In a Hindu temple you can find every variety of humanity. The man of accumulated wealth is there, supporting the institutions that have grown up around the temple, seeking to spend his abundance wisely and for its best purpose so that good merit may be earned for his next life. The pauper is there, begging in hopes that perhaps he will eat tomorrow and the God will inspire some devotee to give him a coin or two. So, a Hindu temple is a reflection of life, set in the midst of the life of the community. It is not making an effort to be better than the life of the village, only to serve that life and direct it to its next stage of evolution. The same Hindu mind which can consume within it all the religions of the world can and does consume within it all of the peoples of the world who are drawn to the temple by the śakti, the power, of the temple. Such is the great embracing compassion of our religion.

The greatness of Hinduism cannot be compared with other religions. There is no basis for comparison. Hinduism, the Eternal way or Sanātana Dharma, has no beginning, therefore will certainly have no end. It was never created, and therefore it cannot be destroyed. It is a God-centric religion. The center of it is God. All of the other religions are prophet-centric. The center of those religions is a great saint or sage, a prophet, a messenger or messiah, some God-Realized person who has lived on Earth and died. Perhaps he was born to cre-

ate that particular sect, that particular religion, needed by the people of a certain part of the world at a certain time in history. The Hindus acknowledge this and recognize all of the world's religious leaders as great prophets, as great souls, as great incarnations, perhaps, of the Gods, or as great beings who have through their realization and inward practices incarnated themselves into, or transformed themselves into, eminent religious leaders and attracted devotees to them to give forth the precepts of life all over again and thus guide a tribe or a nation or a race into a better way of life.

The Hindu mind can encompass this, appreciate it, for it is firmly settled in a God-centric religion. The center of Hinduism is the Absolute, the timeless, formless, spaceless God who manifests as Pure Consciousness and as the most perfect form conceivable, the Primal Soul. He radiates out from that form as a myriad of Gods and Goddesses who inhabit the temples and bless the people, inspire the scriptures, inspire the spiritual leaders and uplift humanity in general. It is a one God in many forms. We recently heard a *sannyāsinī* at the Gaṇeśa Temple in New York describe this in a most wonderful and profound way, "Siva is the fire. Śakti is the heat of that fire. Gaṇeśa is the red color of that fire. Murugan is the light of that fire."

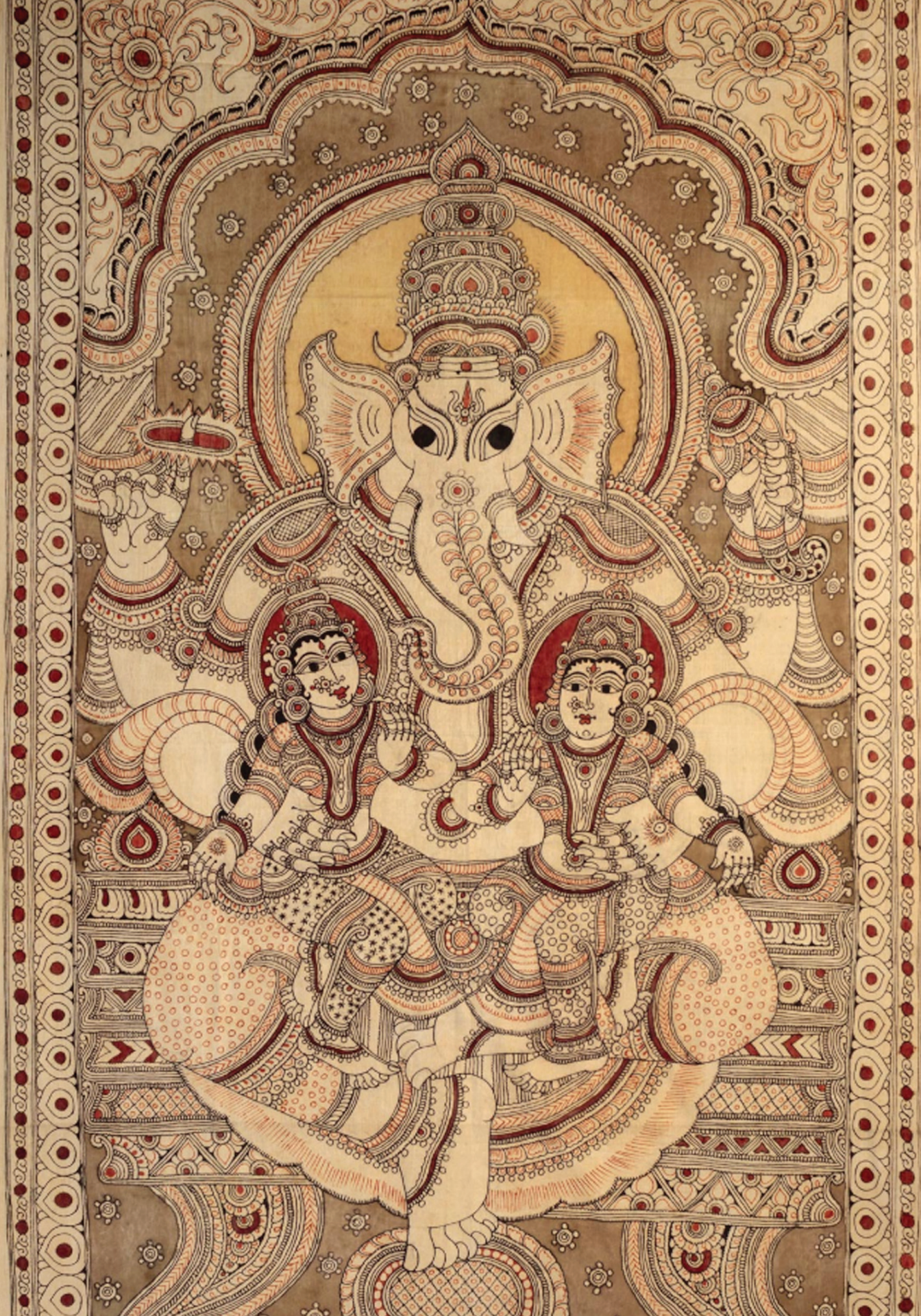
There are nearly a billion Hindus in the world today. That's roughly four times the population of the entire United States. Every sixth person on the planet is a Hindu. Hinduism attends to the needs of each one. It is the only religion that has such breadth and depth. Hinduism contains the Deities and the sanctified temples, the esoteric knowledge of inner states of consciousness, yoga and the disciplines of meditation. It possesses a gentle compassion and a genuine tolerance and appreciation for other religions. It remains undogmatic and open to inquiry. It believes in a just world in which every soul is guided by karma to the ultimate goal of Self Realization, leading to *moksha*, freedom from rebirth. It rests content in the knowledge of the divine origin of the soul, its passage through one life and another until maturity has been reached. It offers guidance to all who take refuge in it, from the nonbeliever to the most evolved mahāṛishi. It cherishes the largest storehouse of scripture and philosophy on the Earth, and the oldest. It is endowed with a tradition of saints and sages, of realized men and women, unrivaled on the Earth. It is the sum of these, and more, which makes me boldly declare that Hinduism is the greatest religion in the world.



CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

How to Become A Hindu

Terraced rice fields in China



How to Become a Hindu

Hinduḥ Katham Bhūyate

हिन्दुः कथं भूयते

From HINDUISM TODAY Magazine, January, 2000

ERITABLY, CONVERSION IS A RED HOT TOPIC IN INDIA THIS MONTH, what with the Pope's visit in November and the US Baptists' insulting October prayers for the conversion of "900 million people lost in the hopeless darkness of Hinduism." Those who know history know that the concept of changing one's faith is nothing new for Hinduism. Long before Islam or Christianity had even begun, Jainism and Buddhism contended with the Sanātana Dharma for the allegiance of India's masses. Great Hindu saints, such as Adi Shankara, Appar and Sundarar, gained fame in large part through their opposition to these nascent religions—an opposition so successful as to practically abolish both in the land of their birth. The other edge of conversion's sword figured when South Indian kings colonized Cambodia, Bali and other parts of Southeast Asia, for in those days, the way of things was the way of kings: the religion of the ruler was the religion of the subjects.

While Hindus are worried about Christian efforts to "save the Pagans," millions in the West are quietly adopting Hinduism in a remarkable and little-discussed silent conversion, a conversion no less powerful and far more extensive than in the past. Sincere seekers in Europe, Africa and the Americas are starting to call themselves Hindu and seek formal entrance into the faith. They are the result of 150 years of Hindu philosophy surging out from India in several waves: first as scriptural translations, then itinerant holy men such as Swāmī Vivekananda, and most recently as part of the diaspora of Hindus out of India, Sri Lanka and Nepal, and the resulting establishment of temples and ashrams in nearly every country of the world. The central Hindu concepts of karma, dharma and reincarnation are now understood by tens of millions not born in the faith but exposed to it through music, film and television, and even commercial advertising.

There remains a significant contingent of orthodox Hindus today who firmly preach that Hinduism does not accept converts. They believe that one must be born a Hindu. Outsiders, no matter how learned or devoted, must wait until another lifetime to enter the faith. Leave alone that this opinion goes against

historical fact, many modern Hindu scholars readily acknowledge that Hinduism does indeed accept converts. In 1899, Swāmī Vivekananda proclaimed, "Why, born aliens have been converted in the past by crowds, and the process is still going on. This statement not only applies to aboriginal tribes, to outlying nations, and to almost all our conquerors before the Mohammedan conquest, but also to all those castes who find a special origin in the *Puranas*. I hold that they have been aliens thus adopted." Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, former president of India, confirms the swāmī's views in a brief passage from his well-known book, *The Hindu View of Life:* "In a sense, Hinduism may be regarded as the first example in the world of a missionary religion. Only its missionary spirit is different from that associated with the proselytizing creeds. It did not regard it as its mission to convert humanity to any one opinion. Worshipers of different Gods and followers of different rites were taken into the Hindu fold. The ancient practice of *vrātyastoma*, described fully in the *Taṇḍya Brāhmaṇa*, shows that not only individuals but whole tribes were absorbed into Hinduism. Many modern sects accept outsiders. *Dvala's Smṛiti* lays down rules for the simple purification of people forcibly converted to other faiths, or of womenfolk defiled and confined for years, and even of people who, for worldly advantage, embrace other faiths."

To the born Hindu of today, the question of entering Hinduism may appear unnecessary, for by one common definition Hinduism is a way of life, a culture, both religious and secular. The Hindu is not accustomed to thinking of his religion as a clearly defined system, distinct and different from other systems, for it fills his every experience. It encompasses all of life. This pure, simple view has to do, in part, with Hinduism's all-embracing quality, to accept so many variations of belief and practice into itself. But this view ignores the true distinctions between this way of life and the ways of the world's other great religions. There is no denying that Hinduism is also a distinct world religion, and to hold otherwise in today's world is a stance fraught with risk.

If Hinduism is not a religion, then it is not entitled to the same rights and protections given to religion by the nations of the world. As just one example, in colonial Trinidad, Hinduism was not recognized as a religion, Hindu marriages were therefore considered illegal, Hindu children illegitimate and unqualified to inherit property. A great deal of Hindu ancestral property was forfeited to the colonial Christian government. The claim that Hinduism is "not a religion" weakens its position socially and legally with respect to other religions in the world community.

Among Hinduism's four major denominations Vaishṇavism, Śaivism, Śaktism and Smārtism—only the Smārta lineage, represented by the various Śaṅkarāchāryas in India such as of Sringeri and Puri, does not accept converts. Smārta priests serving in American temples have consistently refused to perform the *nāmakaraṇa samskāra*, the name-giving ceremony, for non-Hindus by which they could enter the religion. But the spiritual leaders and priests of the remaining sects—representing perhaps ninety percent of Hindus—actively engage in conversion rites.

The hundreds of Hindu swāmīs, pandits and lay persons who regularly travel outside India are a relatively passive band, offering a reasoned presentation of beliefs that listeners are only expected to consider and accept or reject. There is no proselytizing, no tearing down of other faiths. Hindu philosophy lacks the missionary compulsion to bring the whole world into its fold in a kind of spiritual colonialism and cultural invasion. That kind of conversion, which has gone on in India for centuries now, has seriously disrupted communities, turned son against father, wife against husband, friend against friend. Coupled with the enticement of material gain and destruction of ancient traditions, it has destroyed lives. The Hindu form of preaching does none of this.

A direct result of hundreds of swāmīs and yogīs coming to the West, and of tens of thousands of Westerners journeying to India, is the desire by some non-Hindus to become Hindu. The question then is, "How?" This is an issue that we faced five decades ago. Instructed by the great saint of Sri Lanka,

Satguru Siva Yogaswami, to "build a bridge between East and West," I began my mission in America in 1957 and soon tackled the thorny issue of just how to enter the Hindu fold. As with many Americans, I had no prior religion. Hinduism was my first. This early experience, in my twenties, set the pattern for

Aum Gaṇeśa!

Nāmakaraṇa Saṁskāra

नामकरण संस्कार நாமகரண சம்ஸ்காரம்

Hindu Name-Giving Sacrament

I, _____ ,
Hindu Name of Devotee (Please Print)

formerly known as _____, having declared of my own volition acceptance of the principles of the Sanātana Dharma and having formally severed all previous non-Hindu religious affiliations, attachments and commitments, hereby humbly petition entrance into the (❑ Śaiva ❑ Vaishṇava ❑ Śākta ❑ Smārta ❑ other) _____ sect of the Hindu religion through the traditional *nāmakaraṇa saṁskāra* and plead for recognition by the community of devotees witnessing this sacred rite of this irrevocable adoption of or conversion to Hinduism. I have completed a study of the Hindu teachings and hereby proclaim my acceptance of the following nine beliefs of Hinduism and my promise to fulfill to the best of my ability the *pañcha nitya karmas:* worship, *upāsanā;* holy days, *utsava,* virtuous living, *dharma;* pilgrimage, *tīrthayātrā;* and rites of passage, *saṁskāra.* I now avow to the nine beliefs by reading them aloud. Aum.

1. I believe in the divinity of the *Vedas,* the world's most ancient scripture, and venerate the *Āgamas* as equally revealed. These primordial hymns are God's word and the bedrock of Sanātana Dharma, the eternal religion which has neither beginning nor end.
2. I believe in a one, all-pervasive Supreme Being who is both immanent and transcendent, both Creator and Unmanifest Reality.
3. I believe that the universe undergoes endless cycles of creation, preservation and dissolution.
4. I believe in *karma,* the law of cause and effect by which each individual creates his own destiny by his thoughts, words and deeds.
5. I believe that the soul reincarnates, evolving through many births until all *karmas* have been resolved, and *moksha,* spiritual knowledge and liberation from the cycle of rebirth, is attained. Not a single soul will be eternally deprived of this destiny.
6. I believe that divine beings exist in unseen worlds and that temple worship, rituals, sacraments as well as personal devotionals create a communion with these *devas* and Gods.
7. I believe that a spiritually awakened master, or *satguru,* is essential to know the Transcendent Absolute, as are personal discipline, good conduct, purification, pilgrimage, self-inquiry and meditation.
8. I believe that all life is sacred, to be loved and revered, and therefore practice *ahiṁsā,* "noninjury."
9. I believe that no particular religion teaches the only way to salvation above all others, but that all genuine religious paths are facets of God's Pure Love and Light, deserving tolerance and understanding.

Signature: former name: _____ *Hindu name:* _____

It is Hereby Certified

that this devotee, born in _____ on _____ and now residing at_____, was, at a *nāmakaraṇa samskāra* held at the temple known as _____, located in _____, on the auspicious day of _____, duly given a Hindu name in accordance with the traditions of Sanātana Dharma before the Deity, the Mahādevas and the *devas* and the congregation of devotees. This person is thus bound eternally and immutably to the Hindu religion as a member of this most ancient faith with full rights of access to all public Hindu temples, shrines and institutions throughout the world from this day onward. Through this magical Vedic ceremony guardian *devas* have been invoked from the Antarloka to protect, guide and defend this devotee.

_____ OFFICIATING PRIEST

_____ ASSISTANT PRIEST

_____ ELDER WITNESS

_____ ELDER WITNESS

_____ ELDER WITNESS

my ministry in the years to come. We call the pattern "Ethical Conversion," a six-step method that results in a sincere and lasting commitment to the Hindu faith. The Śivāchārya priests of India explained to me that it would take three generations to fully establish Hinduism in a new country.

The most innovative step in ethical conversion—and what truly makes it ethical—is severing from any former faiths. The devotee is asked to go back to his prior religious leader, priest, rabbi, etc., and explain his change of belief in a face-to-face meeting. The leader may attempt to talk the devotee out of his intention, or honor the depth of his new commitment and understanding.

Why such a formal process? In 1966, the Vishva Hindu Parishad issued this definition: "*Hindu* means a person believing in, following or respecting the eternal values of life, ethical and spiritual, which have sprung up in Bharatkhand [India] and includes any person calling himself a Hindu." While self-declaration remains the basic way to enter the Hindu faith, the VHP's 1998 Dharma Samsad meeting in America called for the development of "a process for accepting willing non-Hindus into the Hindu fold, which is an important concern among Hindus living in America." Those concerns include intermarriage, the need for a non-Hindu spouse to adopt the religion of his or her mate and raise their children in a purely Hindu home. Another is the standing policy of most Indian swamis in the West to not formally convert their devotees to Hinduism. They give a Hindu first name, and create what may be called an "Ardha-Hindu"—"Half-Hindu"—who finds himself separated by newfound belief and practice from his old faith, but not fully embraced by his new one. The situation gets especially precarious when it comes to raising children. Are they Hindus, or what? The practical outcome in the last twenty years is that they are raised with no faith.

By setting a standard of ethical conversion, Hindus can also help alter the otherwise predatory nature of religious conversion. If, to apply the idea to another faith, every Hindu who wanted to become a Christian went successfully through an ethical conversion, there would be no claims by Hindus that he had been bribed, coerced, enticed or otherwise forced into the change. Of course, there would also be a lot fewer conversions! Finally, this is a time when religions are looking for ways to get along better. Unfortunately, the disruptive conversion tactics of missionary religions are rarely on the agenda at global meetings. By advocating ethical conversion, Hindus can overcome the single greatest obstacle to interfaith harmony.

SIX STEPS TO ETHICAL CONVERSION

After teaching Hinduism in America for more than fifty years, we at Himalayan Academy have become expert at helping sincere and ardent non-Hindus to enter the Hindu faith in a sincere and lasting manner. Our decades of experience have resulted in the following six steps. This is strictly a program of self-conversion. The motivation comes solely from the individual, and the steps are rigorous enough to require continual demonstration of sincerity.

1. Joining a Hindu community

First and most importantly, the devotee mixes socially with and earns acceptance into an established Hindu community. He worships regularly at the community's *satsaṅgas* or temples, makes yearly pilgrimages, performs daily pūjā and *sādhanas* within the home and strives to live up to the culture.

2. Point-Counterpoint

The devotee undertakes certain assigned studies according to the Hindu denomination he seeks to enter. Simultaneously, he makes a formal analysis of his former religions, denominations, *sampradāyas* or philosophical systems. He then writes a point-counterpoint comparing Hinduism with each such school of thought, carefully noting the similarities and differences. Part two of this assignment is to complete a written analysis of all former pledges or vows (such as those taken at confirmation), indicating when and why each point mentioned in those vows was abandoned. This point-counterpoint is presented to a Hindu elder for review and comment.

3. Severing from Former Mentors

Formal severance is required if the devotee was officially a member of a particular religious denomination, such as the Catholic Church. If he did not formally belong to any religious denomination or institution, he goes on to step four. To complete formal severance, he returns to the former institution and attends services or lectures for a few weeks. Then, accompanied by a relative or friend as a witness, he meets personally with the minister, priest, rabbi, imam or mentor. The devotee explains that he will be joining the Hindu religion and wishes to sever ties with this church or institution. The object is to give the minister the face-to-face opportunity to talk the devotee out of his change of faith. If the devotee successfully conveys his sincerity to the minister, he requests an official letter of severance, stating that he is no longer a member of the former institution. The minister or priest may not give a letter, may give

a release verbally or may refuse to give any form of release. Even in the latter situation, having declared his apostasy, the inner severance is accomplished. In the case of the Catholic Church, anyone who adopts another religion is automatically an apostate and not allowed to receive communion, confession, penance or other rites of the Church.

4. Adopting a Hindu Name

The devotee then proceeds to have a legal change of name. The new name is placed on his passport, driver's license and all important financial or legal instruments, including credit cards, library cards and bank accounts. Even before formal entrance to Hinduism, the devotee is encouraged to begin using his Hindu name—first and last—at all times.

5. The Nāmakaraṇa Samskāra

The name-giving sacrament, *nāmakaraṇa samskāra*, can be held at any Hindu temple. Before the ceremony, the devotee informs family, relatives and close friends of his or her name change and intended entrance into Hinduism. At the sacred name-giving rite, the Hindu name is formally received, vows are taken and a certificate is signed, documenting the former name and the new name, place of ceremony and signature of the priest and at least three witnesses. (A sample *nāmakaraṇa* certificate is provided on page 412 for this purpose.)

6. Announcing the Name-Giving

After the severance and name-giving, the devotee publishes a three-day announcement in a local newspaper stating that the name-change has been completed and that he or she has entered the Hindu religion through the *nāmakaraṇa samskāra*. The devotee should keep a copy of these announcements and all other documents related to the conversion (such as letters from attorneys and elders) as part of a dossier verifying the name-giving, as these may be needed in the future, such as when seeking acceptance into a conservative Hindu organization or seeking permanent residency or citizenship in a foreign country. Similarly, many temples in India and other countries will ask to see the passport or other appropriate proof of Hindu identity before admitting devotees of non-Indian origin for more than casual worship.

THE CEREMONY OF WELCOMING HOME

The *vrātyastoma* ceremony ("vow pronouncement"), dating back to the *Taṇḍya Brāhmaṇa* of the *Ṛig Veda*, is performed for Hindus returning to India from abroad and for those who have embraced other faiths and now wish to reembrace Hinduism. One finds a wide range of converts in India, from communities such as the Syrian Malabar Christians who adopted Christianity shortly after that religion's founding, to the Muslim converts of a thousand years ago, to Indians converted in the last few generations. Especially in the case of many recent converts, the conversion is often superficial, and the return to Hinduism is a simple matter of ceremonial recognition. In other cases, complete reeducation is required.

There are many organizations in India active in reconversion, some motivated by fears of non-Hindu dominance in regions once all Hindu. The Masurāśrama in Mumbai specializes in reconversions through a Śuddhi Śraddha ceremony, bringing dozens of converts back into the Sanātana Dharma each month. Masurāśrama founder, Dharma Bhaskar Masurkar Maharaj, set a strong precedent in 1928 when he organized the purification rite for 1,150 devotees in Goa who had previously converted to Christianity. About the same time, Swami Agamanandaji of the Ramakṛishṇa Mission in Kerala reconverted hundreds to Hinduism, as did Narayana Guru. More recently, two South Indian ashrams—Madurai Aadheenam and Kundrakuddi Aadheenam—have brought thousands of Indians back into Hinduism in mass conversion rites. Since the early 1960s, the Vishva Hindu Parishad has reportedly reconverted a half-million individuals through Śuddhi ceremonies all over India. The VHP activities are extremely distressing to the Christian missionaries who, according to an analysis published in Hinduism Today, February, 1989, spent about us$6,000 to win over each convert.

It is vital that reconversion campaigns are followed up with continuing education, social improvement, community temple building and priest training to create fully self-sustaining groups.

VRĀTYASTOMA CERTIFICATE

On the following page is a *vrātyastoma* certificate that can be photocopied (enlarged or changed as needed) to document this purification ceremony held at any temple. This sacrament marks the formal reentrance into a particular sect of Hinduism through acceptance by established members and the blessings of Gods and devas invoked through rites performed by an authorized priest.

Aum Gaṇeśa!

Vrātyastoma

व्रात्यस्तोम

விரத்தியாஸ்தோம

Purification Sacrament for Returning to the Eternal Faith

I, _____ ,
Hindu Name of Devotee (Please Print)

having voluntarily declared my acceptance of the principles of the Sanātana Dharma, including a firm belief in all-pervasive Divinity, Satchidānanda, and the Vedic revelations of *karma, dharma* and *puṇarjanma,* and having severed all non-Hindu religious affiliations, attachments and commitments, hereby humbly beg to reenter the _____ sect of the Hindu religion through the traditional Vrātyastoma, the purificatory vow ceremony, also known as Śuddhi Śraddhā, and plead for gracious permission from the community to return to my cherished Hindu faith. I solemnly promise to live as an example for the next generation. Aum.

Signature of devotee: _____

It is Hereby Certified

that this devotee, born in _____ on _____ was duly given the *vrātyastoma* ceremony on the auspicious day of _____ at the Hindu temple known as _____, in accordance with the traditions of the world's most ancient faith and vowed before the Deity, the Mahādevas and the *devas* faithfulness to the Sanātana Dharma. Thus, this devotee has been eternally and immutably bound to the Hindu religion and is now again recognized as a member of this and all of our communities worldwide with full rights of access to all public Hindu temples, shrines and institutions throughout the world from this day onward.

_____
OFFICIATING PRIEST

WITNESSES:

_____
ASSISTANT PRIEST

_____
CITY & COUNTRY

Glossary

Śabdāvalī

शब्दावली

aadheenam: ஆதீனம்; Endowment, foundation, institution, establishment, estate, property. A Śaivite Hindu monastery and temple complex in the South Indian Śaiva Siddhānta tradition. Also known as *maṭha* or *pīṭha,* as in Kailāsa Pīṭha. The *aadheenam* head, or pontiff, is called the *Guru Mahāsannidhānam* or *Aadheenakarthar*.

***abhaya* mudrā:** अभयमुद्रा The hand gesture common in Hindu icons, betokening "fear not," in which the fingers of the right hand are raised and the palm faces forward. See: *mudrā.*

abhimāna: अभिमान "Egoism."

abhisheka: अभिषेक "Sprinkling; ablution." Ritual bathing of the Deity's image with water, curd, milk, honey, ghee, rosewater, etc. A special form of pūjā prescribed by Āgamic injunction. Also performed in the inauguration of religious and political monarchs and other special blessings. See: *pūjā.*

abhyāsa: अभ्यास "Throwing towards." Dedicated striving and practice.

ablution: *Snāna.* A washing of the body, especially as a religious ceremony.

Absolute: Lower case (absolute): real, not dependent on anything else, not relative. Upper case (Absolute): Ultimate Reality, the unmanifest, unchanging and transcendent Paraśiva—utterly nonrelational to even the most subtle level of consciousness. It is the Self God, the essence of man's soul. Same as *Absolute Being* and *Absolute Reality.*

abstain: To hold oneself back, to refrain from or doing without. To avoid a desire, negative action or habit.

abyss: A bottomless pit. The dark states of consciousness into which one may fall as a result of serious misbehavior; the seven chakras (psychic centers) or *talas* (realms of consciousness) below the *mūlādhāra* chakra, which is located at the base of the spine. See: *chakra, loka.*

āchārya: आचार्य "Going toward;" "approaching." A highly respected teacher. The wise one who practices what he preaches. A title generally bestowed through *dīkshā* and ordination, such as in the Śivāchārya priest tradition.

actinic: Spiritual, creating light. Adjective derived from the Greek *aktis,* "ray." Of or pertaining to consciousness in its pure, unadulterated state.

actinodic: Spiritual-magnetic; a mixture of odic and actinic force. Actinic refers to consciousness in its pure, unadulterated state. Odic energy, the force of attraction and repulsion between people, and between people and their things, manifests as masculine (aggressive) and feminine (passive), arising from the *piṅgalā* and *iḍā* currents.

adage: An old saying that has been popularly accepted as truth.

adept: Highly skilled; expert. In religion, one who has mastered certain spiritual practices or disciplines. An advanced *yogī.*

adharma: अधर्म "Unrighteousness." The opposite of dharma. Thoughts, words or deeds that transgress divine law. Unrighteousness, irreligiousness; demerit. See: *dharma, pāpa, sin.*

adhyāya: अध्याय "Chapter."

adopt: To recognize as one's own, especially an idea, principle, or even a religion and henceforth live with it and by it.

adulate: To praise, revere, admire or flatter highly.

advaita: अद्वैत "Non-dual; not two-fold." Nonduality or monism. The philosophical doctrine that Ultimate Reality consists of a one principal substance, or God. Opposite of *dvaita*, dualism. Advaita is the primary philosophical stance of the Vedic *Upaniṣhads* and of Hinduism, interpreted differently by the many ṛishis, gurus, pandits and philosophers.

adversity: A state of misfortune, difficulty and trouble; the cause of such.

advocate: To speak or write in support of; to be in favor of.

af rmation: *Dṛiḍhavāchana.* "Firm statement." A positive declaration or assertion. A statement repeated regularly while concentrating on the meaning and mental images invoked, often used to attain a desired result.

af rmation of faith: A brief statement of one's faith and essential beliefs.

affliction: Pain; suffering; distress.

affluence: An abundance of riches; wealth; opulence; plenty.

Āgama: आगम The tradition that has "come down." An enormous collection of Sanskrit scriptures which, along with the *Vedas,* are revered as *śruti* (revealed scripture). The *Āgamas* are the primary source and authority for ritual, yoga and temple construction. Each of the major denominations—Śaivism, Vaishṇavism and Śāktism—has its unique *Āgama* texts.

agarbhatti: अगर्भत्ति "Stick incense." (Gujarati) See: *Incense.*

agni: अग्नि "Fire." 1) One of the five elements, *pañchabhūta.* 2) God of the element fire, invoked through Vedic ritual known as *yajña, agnikāraka, homa* and *havana.* The God Agni is the divine messenger who receives prayers and oblations and conveys them to the heavenly spheres. See: *yajña.*

ahaṁkāra: अहंकार "I-maker." Personal ego. The mental faculty of individuation; sense of duality and separateness from others. Sense of "I-ness," "me" and "mine." *Ahaṁkāra* is characterized by the sense of "I-ness" *(abhimāna),* "mine-ness," identifying with the body *(madīyam),* planning for one's own happiness *(mamasukha),* brooding over sorrow *(mamaduḥkha)* and possessiveness *(mama idam).* See: *āṇava mala, ego.*

ahiṁsā: अहिंसा "Noninjury," nonviolence or nonhurtfulness. Refraining from causing harm to others, physically, mentally or emotionally. Ahiṁsā is the first and most important of the *yamas* (restraints). It is the cardinal virtue upon which all others depend.

ajapa: अजप "Non-recitation." Silent incantation of a *mantra.* See: *japa.*

***ājñā* chakra:** आज्ञाचक्र "Command wheel." The third-eye center. See: *chakra.*

ākāśa: आकाश "Space." The sky. Free, open space. Ether, the fifth and most subtle of the five elements—earth, air, fire, water and ether. Empirically, the rarified space or ethereal fluid plasma that pervades the universes, inner and outer. Esoterically, mind, the superconscious strata holding all that exists and all that potentially exists, wherein all happenings are recorded and can be read by clairvoyants. It is through psychic entry into this transcendental *ākāśa* that cosmic knowledge is gathered and the entire circle of time—past, present and future—can be known. See: *mind (universal).*

akshata: अक्षत "Unbroken." Unmilled, uncooked rice, often mixed with turmeric, offered as a sacred substance during pūjā or in blessings for individuals at weddings and other ceremonies. See: *pūjā.*

alaṅkāra: अलंकर "Ornamentation." Adornment worn by the Deity.

all-pervasive: Diffused throughout or existing in every part of the universe.

amendable: Pliable, willing, open to.

āmra: आम्र "Mango."

amṛita: अमृत "Immortality." Literally, "without death *(mṛita)."* The nectar of divine bliss which flows down from the *sahasrāra* chakra when one enters very deep states of meditation.

amṛitakumbha: अमृतकुम्भ "Pot of immortality." This emblem held by loving Gaṇeśa contains the divine *amṛita* that flows from the *sahasrāra* chakra during deep meditation. It is the nectar of immortality.

ananasa: अननस "Pineapple."

ānanda: आनन्द "Bliss." The pure joy, ecstasy or enstasy, of God-consciousness or spiritual experience. In its highest sense, ānanda is expressed in the famous Vedic description of God: *Sat-chit-ānanda,* "existence-consciousness-bliss"—the divine or superconscious mind of all souls. See: *God Realization.*

āṇava mala: आणवमल "Impurity of smallness; finitizing principle." The individualizing veil of duality that enshrouds the soul. It is the source of finitude and ignorance, the most basic of the three bonds *(āṇava,* karma and māyā) which temporarily limit the soul. The presence of *āṇava mala* is what causes the misapprehension about the nature of God, soul and world, the notion of being separate and distinct from God and the universe. See: *evolution of the soul, grace, mala, soul.*

***añjali* mudrā:** अञ्जलिमुद्रा "Reverence gesture." Also called *praṇāmāñjali.* A gesture of respect and greeting, in which the two palms are held gently together and slightly cupped. Often accompanied by the verbal salutation *namaskāra,* meaning "reverent salutation." See: *mudrā, namaskāra.*

aṅkuśa: अकुंश Goad, the elephant prod, symbol of Lord Gaṇeśa's power to remove obstacles from the devotee's path, and to spur the dullards onward.

Antarloka: अन्तर्लोक "Inner plane," or "in-between world." The astral plane. See: *loka.*

antaryāmin: अन्तर्यामिन् "Inner controller." The conscience, the knowing voice of the soul.

anthology: A choice "flower collection" of prose or poetry excerpts.

antyeshṭi: अन्त्येष्टि "Last rites." Funeral. See: *death, saṁskāra.*

anubhava: अनुभव "Perception, apprehension; experience." Personal experience; understanding; impressions on the mind not derived from memory.

anugraha śakti: अनुग्रहशक्ति "Graceful or favoring power." Revealing grace. God Śiva's power of illumination, through which the soul is freed from the bonds of *āṇava*, karma and māyā and ultimately attains liberation, *moksha.* See: *āṇava mala, grace, Naṭarāja.*

apostate: One who has abandoned what he formerly believed in.

Appar: அப்பர் "Father." Endearing name for Tirunavukarasu (ca 700), one of four Tamil saints, Samayāchāryas, who reconverted Śaivites who had embraced Jainism. Calling himself the servant of God's servants, he composed magnificent hymns in praise of Śiva. See: *Nayanar.*

appellative: A name; title.

Āraṇyaka: आरण्यक "Forest treatise." Third section of each of the four *Vedas.* Texts containing esoteric, mystical knowledge, largely on the inner meanings and functions of the Vedic *yajña,* or fire ceremonies. See: *Vedas.*

āratī: आरती "Light." The circling or waving of a lamp—usually fed with ghee, camphor or oil—before a holy person or the temple Deity at the high point of pūjā. The flame is then presented to the devotees, each passing his or her hands through it and bringing them to the eyes three times, thereby receiving the blessings. *Āratī* can also be performed as the briefest form of pūjā. See: *archana, pūjā.*

archana: अर्चन A special, personal, abbreviated pūjā done by temple priests in which the name, birthstar and family lineage of a devotee are recited to invoke individual guidance and blessings. *Archana* also refers to chanting the names of the Deity, which is a central part of every pūjā. See: *pūjā.*

ardent: Intensely enthusiastic or devoted; warm or intense in feeling.

***ardha*-Hindu:** अर्धहिन्दु "Half-Hindu." A devotee who has adopted Hindu belief and culture to a great extent but has not formally entered the religion through ceremony and taking a Hindu first and last name. Also refers to Easterners born into the faith who adopt non-Hindu names.

arduous: Dificult; requiring much labor, energy or strain.

artha: अर्थ "Goal" or "purpose;" wealth, substance, property, money. Also has the meaning of utility; desire. See: *dharma, purushārtha.*

***aruhu* grass:** அறுகம்புல் Tamil name for a common type of grass sacred to Lord Gaṇeśa, used as an offering in *archana* and for making wreaths for the Deity image. Also known in Tamil as *hariali,* in Sanskrit it is called *dūrvā*, and botanically as *Cynodon dactylon.* See also: *dūrvā.*

Arunagirinathar: அருணகிரிநாதர் South Indian Śaivite poet saint (ca 1500). Also, a title for a respected guru meaning "teacher; master."

Ārya: आर्य "Honorable, noble" or "respectable one; a master, lord."

āsān: ஆசான் "Teacher; master." A title of honor for a respected guru.

ascetic: A person who leads a life of contemplation and rigorous self-denial, shunning comforts and pleasures for religious purposes.

ash: See: *vibhūti.*

ashṭavibhūti: अष्टविभूति "Eight powers." Supernormal *siddhis* mentioned in numerous texts: 1) *animā:* to be as small as an atom; 2) *mahimā:* to become infinitely large; 3) *laghimā:* super-lightness, levitation; 4) *prāpti:* pervasiveness, extension, to be anywhere at will; 5) *prakāmya:* fulfillment of desires; 6) *vashitva:* control of natural forces; 7) *iśititva:* supremacy over nature; 8) *kāma-avasayitva:* complete satisfaction. See also: *siddhi.*

Ashṭavināyaka: अष्टविनायक "The Eight [obstacle] removers." Eight Gaṇeśa *mūrtis* that attract thousands of pilgrims each year at eight temples in Mahārashṭra on the outskirts of Pune in Morgaon, Thevoor, Siddhatek, Ranjangaon, Ojhar Kshetra, Lenyadhri Cave, Mahad and Pali.

āśrama: आश्रम "Place of striving." From *śram,* "to exert energy." Hermitage; order of life. Holy sanctuary; the residence and teaching center of a sādhu, saint, swāmī, ascetic or guru; often includes lodging for students. Also names life's four stages.

***āśrama* dharma:** आश्रमधर्म "Laws of life's orders." See: *dharma.*

astral: Of the subtle, nonphysical sphere (astral plane) which exists between the physical and causal planes. See also: *astral plane.*

astral body: The subtle, nonphysical body *(sūkshma śarīra)* in which the soul functions in the astral plane, the inner world also called Antarloka. The astral body includes the *prāṇic* sheath *(prāṇamaya kośa)*, the instinctive-intellectual sheath *(manomaya kośa)* and the cognitive sheath *(vijñānamaya kośa)*—with the *prāṇic* sheath dropping off at the death of the physical body. See: *kośa, soul.*

astral plane: From the word *astral,* meaning "of the stars." Belonging to the subtle, non-physical dimension also known as the Antarloka, or Second World. "Astral forces" exist in the Second World but can be felt psychically in the First. See also: *loka.*

astrology: Science of celestial influences. See: *jyotisha.*

asura: असुर "Evil spirit; demon." (Opposite of *sura,* meaning "deva; God.") A being of the lower astral plane, Naraka. *Asuras* can and do interact with the physical plane, causing major and minor problems in people's lives. *Asuras* do evolve and do not remain permanently in this state. See: *Naraka.*

asuric: Of the nature of an *asura*, "not spiritual."

atala: अतल "Bottomless region."The first chakra below the *mūlādhāra,* at the hip level. Region of fear and lust. See: *chakra, loka, Naraka.*

atheism: The rejection of all religion or religious belief, or simply the belief that God or Gods do not exist.

ātman: आत्मन् "The soul; the breath; the principle of life and sensation." The soul in its entirety—as the soul body *(ānandamaya kośa)* and its essence (Parāśakti and Paraśiva). One of Hinduism's most fundamental tenets is that we are the ātman, not the physical body, emotions, external mind or personality. See: *Paramātman, soul.*

ātmārtha pūjā: आत्मार्थपूजा "Personal worship rite." Home pūjā. See: *pūjā.*

atone: To make amends or reconcile. See: *pāpa, penance, sin.*

attainment: Acquisition, achievement or realization through effort. Spiritual accomplishment.

attire: Clothes, especially rich or fine apparel; finery.

Aum: ॐ or औम् Often spelled *Oṁ.* The mystic syllable of Hinduism, placed at the beginning of most sacred writings. A symbol of loving Gaṇeśa. As a mantra, it is pronounced *aw* (as in *law*), *oo* (as in

zoo), mm. The dot above, called *anusvāra,* represents the Soundless Sound, Paranāda. In common usage in several Indian languages, *aum* means "yes, verily" or "hail." See also: *nāda*.

aura: The luminous colorful field of subtle energy radiating within and around the human body, extending out from three to seven feet. The colors of the aura change constantly according to the ebb and flow of one's state of consciousness, thoughts, moods and emotions. See: *mind (five states).*

auspicious: *Maṅgala.* Favorable, of good omen, boding well. One of the central concepts in Hindu life. Astrology defines a method for determining times that are favorable for various human endeavors. See: *jyotisha*.

austerity: Self-denial and discipline, physical or mental, performed for acquiring powers (siddhis), attaining grace, conquering the instinctive nature and burning the seeds of past karmas. See: *penance, tapas.*

Auvaiyar: ஔவையார் A woman saint of Tamil Nadu (ca 800 ce), a contemporary of Saint Sundarar, devotee of Lord Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya, or Murugan, and one of the greatest literary figures in ancient India. (See Chapter 17.) Among the most famous are *Atti Chudi, Konrai Ventan, Ulaka Niti, Muturai* and *Nalvali.* Her Tamil primer is studied by children to this day. An earlier traditional date for Auvaiyar of 200 bce is from a story about her and Saint Tiruvalluvar.

avasthā: अवस्था "Condition or state" of consciousness or experience." In Vedic perceptions of consciousness, *avasthā* refers to four states of being discussed in the *Māṇḍūkya Upanishad*: *jāgrat* (or *vaiśvānara),* "wakefulness;" *svapna* (or *taijasa),* "dreaming;" *sushupti,* "deep sleep;" and *turīya,* "the fourth," state, of superconsciousness. A fifth state, "beyond *turīya,*" is *turīyātīta.*

avatāra: अवतार "Descent." A God born in a human (or animal) body. A central concept of Śāktism, Smārtism and Vaishṇavism. See: *incarnation, Ishṭa Devatā, Vaishṇavism.*

avidyā: अविद्या Spiritual "ignorance." Wrongful understanding of the nature of reality. Mistaking the impermanent for the everlasting.

awareness: *Sākshin,* or *chit.* Individual consciousness, perception, knowing; the witness of perception, the "inner eye of the soul." The soul's ability to sense, see or know and to be conscious of this knowing. See: *consciousness.*

āyurveda: आयुर्वेद "Science of life," "science of longevity." A holistic system of medicine and health native to ancient India. The aims of āyurveda are *āyus,* "long life," and *ārogya,* "diseaselessness," which facilitate progress toward ultimate spiritual goals. Health is achieved by balancing energies (especially the *doshas,* bodily humors) at all levels of being.

Bāla Gaṇapati: बालगणपति A name and traditional *mūrti*, or image, of Gaṇeśa meaning the "little (or young) one." He holds five kinds of sweets: banana, mango, sugarcane, jackfruit and *modaka.*

bālasthāpana: बालस्थापन "Initial establishing." The religious rites of firmly determining and blessing the site of a new temple.

Ballaleśvara: बल्लालेश्वर "Lord of Ballala" [after the name of a young devotee]." The Gaṇeśa *mūrti* enshrined at the Pali Temple of Mahārāshṭra.

begrudgingly: Given with ill will or reluctance.

betoken: To be a token or sign of; indicate; show.

Bhagnadanta: भग्नदन्त "He of broken tusk." An epithet of loving Gaṇeśa.

bhajana: भजन Spiritual song. Individual or group singing of devotional songs, hymns and chants. See also: *kīrtana.*

bhakta: भक्त "Devotee." A worshiper. One who is surrendered to the Divine.

bhakti: भक्ति "Devotion." Surrender to God, Gods or guru. Bhakti extends from the simplest expression of devotion to the ego-decimating principle of *prapatti,* which is total surrender. Bhakti is the foundation of all denominations of Hinduism, as well as yoga schools throughout the world. See: *bhakti yoga, darśana, prapatti, prasāda, sacrifice, surrender, yajña.*

Bhakti Gaṇapati: भक्तिगणपति "Dear to devotees" is a popular *mūrti,* unique in that He holds a coconut and a bowl of pudding, mango and banana.

bhakti yoga: भक्तियोग "Union through devotion." Bhakti yoga is the practice of devotional disciplines, worship, prayer, chanting and singing with the aim of awakening love in the heart and opening oneself to God's grace. Bhakti may be directed toward God, Gods or one's spiritual preceptor. Bhakti yoga is embodied in Patañjali's Yoga Darśana in the second limb, *niyama* (observances), as devotion (Īśvarapraṇidhāna). See: *prapatti, yajña.*

bhaṅgima: भङ्गिम "Posture." The position of the limbs, as of a *mūrti.*

Bhārata: भारत The ancient and original name of Indian lands and the constitutional name of independent India (Bhārat In Hindi). Also, Bhāratavarsha "land of Bhārata," a legendary monarch and sage.

Bhāratkhand: "Land of Bhārat," India.

bhāva: भाव Concentrated feeling, emotion, mature bhakti.

Bhūloka: भूलोक "Earth world." The physical plane. See: *loka.*

bhūmikā: भूमिका "Earth; ground; soil." Preface; introduction to a book. From *bhū,* "to become, exist; arise, come into being."

bīja mantra: बीजमन्त्र "Seed syllable." A Sanskrit sound associated with a particular Deity used for invocation during mystic rites.

bindu: बिन्दु "A drop, small particle, dot." 1) The seed or source of creation. 2) Small dot worn on the forehead between the eyebrows or in the middle of the forehead, made of red powder *(kuṅkuma)*, sandalpaste, clay, cosmetics or other substance. It is a sign that one is a Hindu. Mystically, it represents the "third eye," or the "mind's eye," which sees things that the physical eyes cannot see. See also: *tilaka.*

blessing: Good wishes; benediction. Seeking and giving blessings is extremely central in Hindu life, nurtured in the precepts of *kāruṇya* (grace), śakti (energy), *darśana* (encountering/seeing the divine), *prasāda* (blessed offerings), pūjā (invocation), *tīrthayātrā* (pilgrimage), *dīkshā* (initiation), *śaktipāta* (descent of grace), *saṁskāras* (rites of passage), *sānnidhya* (holy presence) and *sādhana* (inner-attunement disciplines).

bond (bondage): See: *evolution of the soul, mala, pāśa.*

boon: *Varadāna.* A welcome blessing, a gracious benefit received. An unexpected benefit or bonus. See: *blessing, grace.*

bountiful: Giving abundantly and without restraint; plentiful.

Brahmā: ब्रह्मा The name of God in His aspect of Creator. Śaivites consider Brahmā, Vishṇu and Rudra to be three of five aspects of Śiva. Smārtas group Brahmā, Vishṇu and Śiva as a holy trinity in which Śiva is the destroyer. *Brahmā* the Creator is not to be confused with 1) Brahman, the Transcendent Supreme of the *Upanishads;* 2) *Brāhmaṇa,* Vedic texts; 3) *brāhmaṇa,* the Hindu priest caste (also spelled *brāhmin*). See: *Brahman, Parameśvara.*

brahmachārī: ब्रह्मचारी "He who is moving in God." An unmarried male spiritual aspirant who practices continence, observes religious disciplines, including *sādhana,* devotion and service and who may be under simple vows. Also names one in the student stage (age 12–24, or until marriage). See: *āśrama dharma.*

brahmachāriṇī: ब्रह्मचारिणी Feminine counterpart of *brahmachārī.*

brahmacharya: ब्रह्मचर्य "Path to God," or "moving in God." Sexual purity—restraint of lust and the instinctive nature. See: *yama-niyama.*

Brahman: ब्रह्मन् "Supreme Being; expansive spirit." From the root *bṛih, "*to grow, increase, expand." Name of God or Supreme Deity in the *Vedas,* where He is described as 1) the Transcendent Absolute, 2) the all-pervading energy and 3) the Supreme Lord or Primal Soul. These three correspond to Śiva in His three perfections. Thus, Śaivites know Brahman and Śiva to be one and the same God. ***—Nirguṇa Brahman:*** God "without qualities *(guṇa),*" i.e., formless, Absolute Reality, Parabrahman, or Paraśiva—totally transcending *guṇa* (quality), manifest existence and even Parāśakti, all of which exhibit perceivable qualities. ***—Saguṇa Brahman:*** God "with qualities;" Śiva in His perfections of Parāśakti and Parameśvara—God as superconscious, omnipresent, all-knowing, all-loving and all-powerful. See: *Parameśvara, Parāśakti, Paraśiva.*

Brāhmaṇa: ब्राह्मण "Knower of God." 1) One of four primary sections of each *Veda;* concerned mainly with details of *yajña*, or sacrificial fire worship, and specific duties and rules of conduct for priests, but also rich in philosophical lore. 2) The first of the four *varṇas,* or social classes, comprising pious souls of exceptional learning, including priests, educators and humanity's visionary guides. Also spelled *brāhmin.* See: *brahmin, varṇa dharma, Vedas.*

Brahmaṇaspati: ब्रह्मणस्पति "Divine artisan." Lord of the Holy Word.

Brahmāṇḍa: ब्रह्माण्ड "Egg of God," or "Cosmic egg." The cosmos; inner and outer universe. See: *loka, three worlds, world.*

brahmarandhra: ब्रह्मरन्ध्र "Door of Brahman." See: *door of Brahman.*

Brahma Sūtra(s): ब्रह्मसूत्र "Threads (aphorisms) of the Absolute." Also known as the *Vedānta Sūtras,* composed by Bādarāyaṇa (ca 400 bce) as the first known systematic exposition of Upanishadic thought. Its 550 aphorisms are so brief as to be virtually unintelligible without commentary. It was through interpretations of this text, as well as the *Upanishads* themselves and the *Bhagavad Gītā,* that later schools of Vedānta expressed and formulated their own views of the Upanishadic tenets. See: *Upanishad, Vedānta.*

brahmin *(brāhmaṇa):* ब्राह्मण "Mature or evolved soul." The class of pious souls of exceptional learning. From *Brāhman,* "growth, expansion, evolution, development, swelling of the spirit or soul." The mature soul is the exemplar of wisdom, tolerance, forbearance and humility.

brahminical tradition: The hereditary religious practices of the Vedic brahmins, such as reciting mantras, and personal rules for daily living.

Bṛihaspati: बृहस्पति "Lord of Prayer." Vedic preceptor of the Gods and Lord of the Word, sometimes identified with Lord Gaṇeśa. See: *Gaṇeśa.*

Buddha: बुद्ध "The Enlightened." Usually the title of Siddhārtha Gautama (ca 624–544 bce), a prince born of the Śākya clan—a Śaivite Hindu tribe in eastern India on the Nepalese border. He renounced the world and became a monk. After his enlightenment he preached the doctrines upon which his followers later founded Buddhism. See also: *Buddhism.*

buddhi: बुद्धि "Intellect, reason, logic." The intellectual or disciplined mind. It is a faculty of *manomaya kośa,* the instinctive-intellectual sheath. See: *intellectual mind, kośa, mind (individual).*

Buddhi* and *Siddhi: बुद्धि सिद्धि "Wisdom and attainment (or fulfillment);" names of the two symbolic consorts of Lord Gaṇeśa.

Buddhism: The religion based on the teachings of Siddhārtha Gautama, known as the Buddha (ca 624–544 bce). He refuted the idea of man's having an immortal soul and did not preach of any Supreme Deity. Instead he taught that man should seek to overcome greed, hatred and delusion and attain enlightenment through realizing the Four Noble Truths and following the Eightfold Path. See also: *Buddha.*

cajan: Rectangular panels of woven palm fronds used as roof, wall and fencing material.

camphor:-*Karpūra.* An aromatic white crystalline solid derived from the wood of camphor trees (or prepared synthetically from pinene), prized as fuel in temple *āratī* lamps. See: *āratī, pūjā.*

caste: A hierarchical system, called *varṇa* dharma (or *jāti* dharma), established in India in ancient times, which determined the privileges, status, rights and duties of the many occupational groups, wherein status is determined by heredity. There are four main classes *(varṇas)*—brāhmin, kshatriya, vaiśya and śūdra—and innumerable castes, called *jāti.* See also: *varṇa dharma.*

causal plane: Highest plane of existence, Śivaloka. See: *loka, three worlds.*

celebrant: A person who performs a religious rite.

celestial: "Of the sky or heavens." Of or relating to the heavenly regions or beings. Highly refined, divine.

ceremony: A formal rite established by custom or authority as proper to special occasions. From the Latin *caerimonia,* "awe; reverent rite."

chaitanya: चैतन्य "Spirit, consciousness, especially higher consciousness; Supreme Being."A widely used term, often preceded by modifiers, e.g., *sākshī chaitanya,* "witness consciousness," or bhakti *chaitanya,* "devotional consciousness," or Śivachaitanya, "God consciousness." See: *chitta, consciousness, mind (five states).*

chakra: चक्र "Wheel." A) In iconography, a disk-shaped weapon among the insignia of loving Gaṇeśa (and of Lord Vishṇu as well). It is a symbol of the sun and of the mind. Wielded as a weapon, it is the intellect divinely empowered. B) Metaphysically, any of the nerve plexuses or centers of force and consciousness located within the *inner bodies* of man. In the physical body there are corresponding nerve plexuses, ganglia and glands. The seven principal chakras can be seen psychically as colorful, multi-petaled wheels or lotuses. They are situated along the spinal cord from the base to the cranial chamber. Additionally, seven chakras, barely visible, exist below the spine. They are seats of instinctive consciousness, the origin of jealousy, hatred, envy, guilt, sorrow, etc. They constitute the lower or hellish world, called Naraka or *pātāla.* Thus there are 14 major chakras in all. The seven upper chakras, from lowest to highest, are: 1)-***mūlādhāra*** (base of spine): memory, time and space; 2) ***svādhishṭhāna*** (below navel): reason; 3) ***maṇipūra*** (solar plexus): willpower; 4) ***anāhata*** (heart center): direct cognition; 5)-***viśuddha*** (throat): divine love; 6) ***ājñā*** (third eye): divine sight; 7) ***sahasrāra*** (crown of head): illumination, Godliness. The seven lower chakras, from highest to lowest, are 1) ***atala*** (hips): fear and lust; 2) ***vitala*** (thighs): raging anger; 3) ***sutala*** (knees): retaliatory jealousy; 4) ***talātala*** (calves): prolonged mental confusion; 5) ***rasātala*** (ankles): selfishness; 6)-***mahātala*** (feet): absence of conscience; 7) ***pātāla*** (located in the soles of the feet): murder and malice.

chāmara: चामर Fly-whisk fan.

chandana: चन्दन "Sandalwood" paste. One of the sacred substances offered during pūjā and afterwards distributed to devotees as a sacrament *(prasāda).* See: *sandalwood.*

chandra: चन्द्र "The moon." Of central importance in Hindu astrology and in the calculation of the festival calendar. Considered the ruler of emotion.

Chintāmaṇi: चिन्तामणि "Jewel of consciousness." The Gaṇeśa *mūrti* enshrined at the Thevoor Temple near Pune, Mahārāshṭra.

chit: चित् "Consciousness" or "awareness." Philosophically, "pure awareness; transcendent consciousness," as in *Sat-chit-ānanda.* In mundane usage, *chit* means "perception; consciousness." See: *awareness, chitta, consciousness, mind (universal).*

chitta: चित्त "Mind; consciousness." Mind-stuff. On the personal level, it is that in which mental impressions and experiences are recorded. Seat of the conscious, subconscious and superconscious states and of the three-fold mental faculty called *antaḥkaraṇa,* consisting of *buddhi, manas* and *ahaṁkāra.* See: *consciousness, mind (individual), mind (universal).*

chūḍākaraṇa: चूडाकरण "Head-shaving sacrament." See: *saṁskāra.*

ćhuri: छुरि "Dagger." A rare weapon among Gaṇeśa's insignia. Its sharp blade is like the "razor's edge," the narrow path spiritual aspirants must walk.

circumambulation: *Pradakshiṇā.* Walking around, usually clockwise. See: *pradakshiṇā, pūjā.*

clairaudience: "Clear-hearing." Psychic or divine hearing, *divyaśravana.* The ability to hear the inner currents of the nervous system, the Aum and other mystic tones. Hearing in one's mind the words of inner-plane beings or earthly beings not physically present. Also, hearing the *nādanāḍī śakti* through the day or while in meditation. See: *clairvoyance, nāda.*

clairvoyance: "Clear-seeing." Psychic or divine sight, *divyadṛishṭi.* The ability to look into the inner worlds and see auras, chakras, *nāḍīs,* thought

forms, nonphysical people and subtle forces. The ability to see from afar or into the past or future—*avadhijñāna,* "knowing beyond limits."Also the ability to separate the light that illumines one's thoughts from the forms the light illumines.

clear white light: Inner light at a high level of intensity, very clear and pure. When experienced fully, it is seen to be permeating all of existence, the universal substance of all form, inner and outer, pure consciousness, Satchidānanda. This experience, repeated at regular intervals, can yield "a knowing greater than you could acquire at any university or institute of higher learning." See: *Śiva consciousness, tattva.*

cognition: Knowing; perception. Knowledge reached through intuitive, superconscious faculties rather than through intellect alone.

commitment: Dedication or engagement to a long-term course of action.

commune: To communicate closely, sharing thoughts, feelings or prayers in an intimate way. To be in close rapport.

compatible: Capable of combining well; getting along, harmonious.

compromise: A settlement in which each side gives up some demands or makes concessions; a weakening, as of one's principles.

concentration: Uninterrupted and sustained attention.

conscience: The inner sense of right and wrong, sometimes called "the knowing voice of the soul." However, the conscience is affected by the individual's training and belief patterns, and is therefore not necessarily a perfect reflection of dharma.

conscious mind: The external, everyday state of consciousness. See: *mind.*

consciousness: *Chitta* or *chaitanya.* 1) A synonym for mind-stuff, *chitta;* or 2) the condition or power of perception, awareness, apprehension. There are myriad gradations of consciousness, from the simple sentience of inanimate matter, to the consciousness of basic life forms, to the higher consciousness of human embodiment, to omniscient states of superconsciousness, leading to immersion in the One universal consciousness, Paraśakti. Five classical "states" of awareness are discussed in scripture: 1) wakefulness *(jāgrat),* 2) "dream" *(svapna)* or astral consciousness, 3) "deep sleep" *(sushupti)* or subsuperconsciousness, 4) the superconscious state beyond *(turīya* "fourth") and 5) the utterly transcendent state called *turīyātīta* ("beyond the fourth"). See: *awareness, chaitanya, chitta, mind (all entries).*

consort: Spouse, especially of a king or queen, God or Goddess. Among the Gods there are actually no sexes or sexual distinctions, though in mythological folk-narratives, Hinduism traditionally represents these great beings in elaborate anthropomorphic depictions. Matrimony and human-like family units among the Gods are derived from educational tales intended to illustrate the way people should and should not live. See: *Śakti.*

contemplation: Religious or mystical absorption beyond meditation. See: *rāja yoga, samādhi.*

contemplative: Inclined toward a spiritual, religious, meditative way of life.

contempt: Attitude that considers someone or something as low, worthless.

continence (continent): Restraint, moderation or, most strictly, total abstinence from sexual activity. See: *brahmacharya.*

contradiction: A statement in opposition to another; denial; a condition in which things tend to be contrary to each other.

convert: To change from one religion or philosophy to another. A person who has so changed.

covenant: A binding agreement to do or keep from doing certain things.

covet: To want ardently, especially something belonging to another. To envy.

cranial chakras: The *ājñā,* or third-eye center, and the *sahasrāra,* at the top of the head near the pineal and pituitary glands. See: *chakra.*

Creator: He who brings about creation. Śiva as one of His five powers. See: *Naṭarāja, Parameśvara.*

cremation: *Dahana.* Burning of the dead. Cremation is the traditional system of disposing of bodily remains, having the positive effect of releasing the soul most quickly from any lingering attachment to the earth plane. In modern times, cremation facilities are widely available in nearly every country, though gas-fueled chambers generally take the place of the customary wood pyre.

creole: Any one of numerous mixed, usually subliterary, languages, such as the French creoles spoken in Louisiana or Mauritius.

crown chakra: *Sahasrāra* chakra. The thousand-petaled cranial center of divine consciousness. See: *chakra.*

dāḍima: दाडिम Pomegranate.

dakshiṇā: दक्षिणा A fee or honorarium given to a priest at the completion of any rite; also a gift given to gurus as a token of appreciation for their infinite spiritual blessings.

dakshiṇāyaṇa: दक्षिणायण "Southern way." Names the half-year, *ayana,* beginning with summer solstice, when the sun begins its apparent southward journey.

dāna: दान "Generosity, giving; gift." See: *yama-niyama.*

daṇḍa: दण्ड "Stick," or "staff of support." The staff carried by a sādhu or sannyāsin, representing the *tapas* which he has taken as his only support, and the vivifying of *sushumṇā* and consequent Realization he seeks. *Daṇḍa* also connotes "penalty or sanction."

This sign of authority is one of the emblems of loving Gaṇeśa. See: *sannyāsin.*

darśana: दर्शन "Vision, sight." Seeing the Divine. Beholding, with inner or outer vision, a temple image, Deity, holy person or place, with the desire to inwardly contact and receive the grace and blessings of the venerated being or beings. Also: "point of view," doctrine or philosophy.

day of Brahmā: One *kalpa,* or period, in the infinitely recurring periods of the universe's creation, preservation and dissolution. One day of Brahma is equal to 994 *mahāyugas* (a *mahāyuga* is one cycle of the four *yugas:* Satya, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali). This is calculated as 4,294,080,000 years. After each day of Brahmān occurs a *pralaya* (or *kalpanta,* "end of an eon"), when both the physical and subtle worlds are absorbed into the causal world. This state of withdrawal or "night of Brahmā," continues for the length of an entire *kalpa* until creation again issues forth.

death: Death is a rich concept for which there are many words in Sanskrit, such as *mahāprasthāna,* "great departure;" *samādhimaraṇa,* dying consciously while in the state of meditation; *mahāsamādhi,* "great merger, or absorption," naming the departure of an enlightened soul. Hindus know death to be the soul's detaching itself from the physical body and continuing on in the subtle body *(sūkshma śarīra)* with the same desires, aspirations and activities as when it lived in a physical body. See: *reincarnation.*

decorum: Propriety and good taste in behavior, speech, dress, etc.

deformity: Condition of being disfigured or made ugly in body, mind or emotions.

Deity: "God." Can refer to an image or *mūrti* in a temple or to the Mahādeva the *mūrti* represents. See: *mūrti, pūjā.*

demean: To lower in status or character; degrade.

demureness: Decorousness, modesty, shyness, reserved manner.

denomination: A name for a class of things, especially for various religious groupings, sects and subsects. See: *guru paramparā, sampradāya.*

deprivations: Forced conditions of loss or neediness.

destiny: Final outcome. The seemingly inevitable or predetermined course of events. See: *karma.*

deter: To keep one from doing something by instilling fear, anxiety, doubt, etc.

detractor: One who discredits, slanders or disparages someone else.

deva: देव "Shining one." A being inhabiting the higher astral plane, in a subtle, nonphysical body. Deva is also used in scripture to mean "God or Deity." See: *Mahādeva.*

Devanāgarī: देवनागरी "Divine city [script]." The alphabetic script in which Sanskrit, Prākṛit, Hindi and Marāṭhi are written. A descendant of the Northern type of the Brāhmī script. It is characterized by the connecting, horizontal line at the top of the letters. See also: *Sanskrit.*

Devī: देवी "Goddess." A name of Śakti, used especially in Śāktism. See: *Śakti, Śāktism.*

devonic: Angelic, heavenly. Of the nature of the higher worlds, in tune with the refined energies of the higher chakras or centers of consciousness.

devotee: A person strongly dedicated to something or someone, such as to a God or a guru. The term *disciple* implies an even deeper commitment. See: *guru bhakti, guru-śishya system.*

dhanus: धनुस "Bow." Anything bow shaped; a weapon for shooting arrows.

dharma: धर्म "Righteousness." From *dhṛi,* "to sustain; carry, hold." Hence dharma is "that which contains or upholds the cosmos." Dharma, religion, is a complex and comprehensive term with many meanings, including divine law, law of being, way of righteousness, ethics, duty, responsibility, virtue, justice, goodness and truth. Essentially, dharma is the orderly fulfillment of an inherent nature or destiny. Relating to the soul, it is the mode of conduct most conducive to spiritual advancement, the right and righteous path. There are four principal kinds of dharma, known collectively as ***chaturdharma:*** "four religious laws:" 1) ***ṛita:*** "Universal law." The inherent order of the cosmos. 2) ***varṇa* dharma:** "Law of one's kind." Social duty. 3) ***āśrama* dharma:** "Duties of life's stages." Human or developmental dharma. The natural process of maturing from childhood to old age through fulfillment of the duties of each of the four stages of life—*brahmachārī* (student), *gṛihastha* (householder), *vānaprastha* (elder advisor) and *sannyāsa* (religious solitaire). 4) ***svadharma***: "Personal path, pattern or obligation." One's perfect individual pattern through life, according to one's own particular physical, mental and emotional nature.

Dharma Śāstra: धर्मशास्त्र "Religious law book." A term referring to all or any of numerous codes of Hindu civil and social law composed by various authors. The best known and most respected are those by Manu and Yājñavalkya, thought to have been composed as early as 600 bce. See: *Smṛiti.*

dhotī: धोती (Hindi) A long, unstitched cloth wound about the lower part of the body, and sometimes passed between the legs and tucked into the waist. A traditional Hindu apparel for men.

Dhumravarṇa: धुम्रवर्ण "Smoke-colored." Gaṇeśa's aspect as the conqueror of *abhimāna,* pride.

Ḍhuṇḍhi Gaṇapati: ढुण्ढिगणपति "Gaṇeśa, the sought after," enshrined in Varāṇasi, having four arms, an axe, prayer beads, tusk and a pot of gems.

dhvaja: ध्वज "Flag." Part of the pageantry of Hinduism, orange or red flags and banners, flown at festivals and other special occasions, symbolize the

victory of *Sanātana Dharma*. See: *festival.*

dhyāna: ध्यान "Meditation." See: *internalized worship, meditation, rāja yoga.*

diaspora: From the Greek, "scattering." A dispersion of religious or ethnic group(s) to foreign countries, such as the scattering of Jews when driven out of the land of Israel, or Hindus driven from Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

dīkshā: दीक्षा "Initiation." Solemn induction by which one is entered into a new realm of awareness and practice by a teacher or preceptor through the bestowing of blessings and the transmission of *prāṇas*. Denotes initial or deepened connection with the teacher and his lineage and is usually accompanied by ceremony. Initiation, revered as a moment of awakening, may be conferred by a touch, a word, a look or a thought. Most Hindu schools, and especially Śaivism, teach that only with initiation from a *satguru* is enlightenment attainable. Sought after by all Hindus is the *dīkshā* called *śaktipāta,* "descent of grace," which, often coming unbidden, stirs and arouses the mystic kuṇḍalinī force.

dilute: To change or weaken by mixing with something else.

dīpastambha: दीपस्तम्भ "Standing light." A standing lamp found in the temple, shrine room or home. It is made of metal, with several wicks fed by ghee or special oils. Used to light the home and in pūjā, part of temple and shrine altars, the standing lamp is sometimes worshiped as the divine light, Parāśakti or Parajyoti. Returning from the temple and lighting one's *dīpastambha* courts the accompanying devas to remain in the home and channels the vibration of the temple sanctum sanctorum into the home shrine. *Kuttuvilaku* in Tamil.

discrimination: *Viveka.* Act or ability to distinguish or perceive differences. In spirituality, the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, real and apparent, eternal and transient.

divisive: Causing division, especially causing disagreement or dissension.

docile: Easy to teach, tractable, obedient.

door of Brahman: *Brahmarandhra;* also called *nirvāna* chakra. A subtle or esoteric aperture in the crown of the head, the opening of *sushumṇā nāḍī* through which kuṇḍalinī enters in ultimate Self Realization, and the spirit escapes at death. Only the spirits of the truly pure leave the body in this way. *Saṁsārīs* take a downward course. See: *jñāna, kuṇḍalinī.*

dormant: Sleeping; inactive; not functioning.

dossier: A comprehensive collection of documents about a subject or person.

doxology: Praising, or gloriying.

dualism: Opposite of monism. Any doctrine which holds that there are two eternal and distinct realities in the universe, e.g., God-world, good-evil.

Durga Gaṇapati: दुर्गागणपति The "invincible," "unconquerable" fortress or stronghold. An eight-armed *mūrti* distinguished by the flag of victory, bow and arrow and strand of prayer beads.

dūrvā: दूर्वा A type of grass, also called *aruhu* and *harali,* sacred to Gaṇeśa, traditionally offered to Him in *pūjā. Cynodon dactylon.* See: *aruhu grass.*

dvaita-advaita: द्वैत अद्वैत "Dual-nondual; twoness-not twoness." Among the most important terms in the classification of Hindu philosophies. *Dvaita* and *advaita* define two ends of a vast spectrum. —***dvaita:*** The doctrine of dualism, according to which reality is ultimately composed of two irreducible principles, entities, truths, etc. God and soul, for example, are seen as eternally separate. —**dualistic:** Of or relating to dualism, concepts, writings, theories which treat dualities (good-and-evil, high-and-low, them-and-us) as fixed, rather than transcendable. —**pluralism:** A form of nonmonism which emphasizes three or more eternally separate realities, e.g., God, soul and world. —***advaita:*** The doctrine of nondualism or monism, that reality is ultimately composed of one whole principle, substance or God, with no independent parts. In essence, all is God. —**monistic theism:** A dipolar view which encompasses both monism and dualism. See: *monistic theism.*

Dvija Gaṇapati: द्विजगणपति "The twice-born." A name and traditional *mūrti*, or form, of Gaṇeśa. He holds a scripture, a staff and a japa *mālā,* reminding devotees of the need for disciplined striving.

Dvimukha Gaṇapati: द्विमुखगणपति The unmistakable "double-faced" *mūrti* of Lord Gaṇeśa. He holds a noose, goad, broken tusk and a pot of gems.

earrings: Decorative jewelry worn in the ears by Hindu women and many men. Ear-piercing for earrings is said to bring health (right ear) and wealth (left ear).

ecumenical: General or universal. —**ecumenism:** the principles or practices of promoting worldwide cooperation and better understanding among differing denominations, especially among Christians. From the Greek *oecumene,* "the inhabited world." A Christian term. The broader term *interfaith* is used by all religions striving for peace and harmony.

edampuri: एदम्पुरि "Left-turning." Images of Gaṇeśa in which the trunk is turning to the Deity's left. This is the common form. Cf: *valampuri.*

edict: An official public order issued by an authority.

ef gy: Image, likeness, icon, statue, figure.

effulgent: Having great brightness; radiance; brilliant; full of light.

ego: The external personality or sense of "I" and "mine." Broadly, individual identity. In Śaiva

Siddhānta and other schools, the ego is equated with the *tattva* of *ahaṁkāra,* "I-maker," which bestows the sense of I-ness, individuality and separateness from God. See: *āṇava mala.*

Ekadanta Gaṇapati: एकदन्तगणपति He of "single tusk" is the four-armed Gaṇeśa *mūrti* holding axe, beads, *laddu* (sweet) and His broken tusk.

Ekākshara Gaṇapati: एकाक्षरगणपति He of "single-syllable" (गं *gaṁ)* sits in lotus pose upon Mūshika, offering the boon-giving gesture, *abhaya* mudrā.

eloquent: Vivid, forceful, fluent, graceful and persuasive speech or writing.

enchantment: A magic spell; a bewitching, captivating power.

enlightened: Having attained enlightenment, Self Realization. A *jñānī* or *jīvanmukta.* See: *enlightenment, jñāna, Self Realization.*

enlightenment: For Śaiva monists, Self Realization, *samādhi* without seed *(nirvikalpa samādhi);* the ultimate attainment, sometimes referred to as Paramātma *darśana,* or as ātma *darśana,* "Self vision" (a term which appears in Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras).* Enlightenment is the experience-nonexperience resulting in the realization of one's transcendent Self—Paraśiva—which exists beyond time, form and space. See: *God Realization, kuṇḍalinī, Self Realization.*

enmity: Bitter attitude or adverse feelings to an enemy; hostility; antagonism.

enstasy: A term coined in 1969 by Mircea Eliade to contrast the Eastern view of bliss as "standing inside oneself" (enstasy) with the Western view as ecstasy, "standing outside oneself." A word chosen as the English equivalent of *samādhi.* See: *rāja yoga, samādhi.*

entanglements: Involvements in difficulty; being tangled or confused.

ephemeral: Transient, temporary, not lasting.

epithet: Descriptive name, or title of a Deity.

equivocal: Uncertain; undecided; doubtful.

eradicate: To "root out," destroy, get rid of.

erukku: Tamil name for flower (Botanically *Calotropis)* sacred to Lord Gaṇeśa. *Erukku* flowers are strung together and placed 'round the crown and neck of Gaṇeśa during worship ceremonies, especially at festival times.

esoteric: Beyond the understanding of all but a few, or the initiated.

ether: *Ākāśa.* Space, the most subtle of the five elements. See: *ākāśa, tattva.*

ethical restraints: See: *yama-niyama.*

ethical observances: See: *yama-niyama.*

ethics: The code or system of morals of a nation, people, religion, etc. See: *dharma, pañcha nitya karmas, puṇya, yama-niyama.*

evil: That which is bad, morally wrong, causing harm, pain, misery. In Western religions, evil is often thought of as a moral antagonism to God. Hindus hold that evil, known in Sanskrit as *pāpa, pāpman* or *dushṭā,* is the result of unvirtuous acts *(pāpa* or *adharma*) caused by the instinctive-intellectual mind dominating and obscuring deeper, spiritual intelligence. The evil-doer is viewed as a young soul, ignorant of the value of right thought, speech and action, unable to live in the world without becoming entangled in māyā. **—intrinsic evil:** Inherent, inborn badness. Hinduism holds that there is no intrinsic evil, and the real nature of man is his divine, soul nature, which is goodness. See: *hell, karma, pāpa, sin.*

evolution of the soul: *Adhyātma prasāra.* In Śaiva Siddhānta the soul's evolution is a progressive unfoldment, growth and maturing toward its inherent, divine destiny, which is complete merger with Śiva. In its essence, each soul is ever perfect. But as an individual soul body emanated by God Śiva, it is like a small seed yet to develop. As an acorn needs to be planted in the dark underground to grow into a mighty oak tree, so must the soul unfold out of the darkness of the *malas* to full maturity and realization of its innate oneness with God. The soul is not created at the moment of conception of a physical body. Rather, it is created in the Śivaloka. It evolves by taking on denser and denser sheaths—cognitive, instinctive-intellectual and *prāṇic*—until finally it takes birth in physical form in the Bhūloka. Then it experiences many lives, maturing through the reincarnation process. Thus, from birth to birth, souls learn and mature. See: *mala, moksha, saṁsāra.*

exemplify: To show by being an example of.

experience: From the Latin *experior,* "to prove; put to the test." Living through an event; personal involvement. In Sanskrit, *anubhava.* See: *anubhava.*

extol: To praise highly; laud.

faith: Trust or belief. Conviction. From the Latin *fides,* "trust." *Faith* in its broadest sense means "religion," "dharma." More specifically, it is the essential element of religion—the belief in phenomena beyond the pale of the five senses, distinguishing it sharply from rationalism. Faith is established through intuitive or transcendent experience of an individual, study of scripture and hearing the testimony of the many wise ṛishis speaking out the same truths over thousands of years. The Sanskrit equivalent is *śraddhā.*

fast: Abstaining from all or certain foods, as in observance of a vow or holy day. Hindus fast in various ways. A simple fast may consist of merely avoiding certain foods for a day or more, such as when nonvegetarians abstain from fish, fowl and meats. A moderate fast would involve avoiding heavier foods,

or taking only juices, teas and other liquids. Such fasts are sometimes observed only during the day, and a normal meal is permitted after sunset. Serious fasting, which is done under supervision, involves taking only water for a number of days and requires a cessation of most external activities.

fellowship: Companionship. Mutual sharing of interests, beliefs or practice. A group of people with common interests and aspirations.

festival: A time of religious celebration and special observances. Festivals generally recur yearly, their dates varying slightly according to astrological calculations. They are characterized by acts of piety (elaborate pūjās, penance, fasting, pilgrimage) and rejoicing (songs, dance, music, parades, storytelling and scriptural reading).

First World: The physical universe, called Bhūloka, of gross or material substance in which phenomena are perceived by the five senses. See: *loka.*

ve classical duties: See: *pañcha nitya karmas.*

Five Letters (syllables): See: *Namaḥ Śivāya.*

forehead marks: See: *bindu, tilaka, tripuṇḍra.*

forestall: Prevent, hinder, obstruct, intercept.

forfeiting: Losing something due to a crime or fault or neglect of duty.

four traditional goals: *Chaturvarga,* "four-fold good," or *purushārtha,* "human goals or purposes"—duty (dharma), wealth *(artha),* love (kāma) and liberation *(moksha).* See: *purushārtha.*

funeral rites: See: *cremation.*

gādā: गदा "Mace." A rough-headed club, one of the insignia of Gaṇeśa, representing His power to cast karmas back on devotees until fully resolved.

gaja: गज The elephant, king of beasts, representative of Lord Gaṇeśa and sign of royalty and power. Many major Hindu temples keep one or more elephants.

Gajānana: गजानन "Elephant-faced." A popular name of Gaṇeśa, which appears in the *Mudgala Purāṇa,* as the vanquisher of *lobha,* greed.

***Gaṁ* Mantra:** गंमन्त्र The seed sound, or *bīja* mantra, of Loving Gaṇeśa. *Bīja* mantras, being on one syllable, represent the essence of more complex sound combinations. *Gaṁ* is the root sound within the *mūlādhāra* chakra.

gaṇa(s): गण "Number," hence "throng," "troop," "retinue;" a body of followers or attendants." A troop of demigods—God Śiva's attendants, devonic helpers under the supervision of Lord Gaṇeśa. See: *Gaṇapati, Gaṇeśa.*

Gaṇanāthas: गणनाथ "Lords of hosts." As a singular, *Gaṇanātha* refers to Lord Gaṇeśa. Plural, to the many divine beings who help in guiding the flow of consciousness under the direction of the Mahādevas.

Gaṇapati: गणपति "Leader of the *gaṇas*." A name of *Gaṇeśa.*

Gaṇapati Upanishad: गणपति उपनिषद् A later *Upanishad* on Lord Gaṇeśa, not connected with any *Veda;* date of composition is unknown. It is a major scripture for the Gaṇapatians, a minor Hindu sect which reveres Gaṇeśa as Supreme God and is most prevalent in India's Maharashtra state. See: *Gaṇeśa.*

gandha: गन्ध "Smell, odor, fragrance." *Gandha* is the fifth of five *tanmātrās,* "primal substances," from which the gross elements, *mahābhūtas* (or *pañchbautikas),* arise in the evolution of the *tattvas*. Smell is the *tanmātrā* corresponding to the earth element, *pṛithivī.* See: *tanmātrā.*

Gaṇeśa: गणेश "Lord of Categories." (From *gaṇ,* "to count or reckon," and *Īśa,* "lord.") Or: "Lord of attendants *(gaṇa),"* synonymous with *Gaṇapati.* Gaṇeśa is a Mahādeva, the beloved elephant-faced Deity honored by Hindus of every sect. He is the Lord of Obstacles (Vighneśvara), revered for His great wisdom and invoked first before any undertaking, for He knows all intricacies of each soul's karma and the perfect path of dharma that makes action successful. He sits on the *mūlādhāra* chakra and is easy of access.

Gaṇeśa Chaturthī: गणेश चतुर्थी Birthday of Lord Gaṇeśa, a ten-day festival of August-September culminating in a spectacular parade called *Gaṇeśa Visarjana*. It is a time of rejoicing, when all Hindus worship together.

Gaṇeśa Visarjana: गणेश विसर्जन "Gaṇeśa departure." A parade usually occurring on the 11th day after Gaṇeśa Chaturthī, in which the Gaṇeśa *mūrtis* made for the occasion are taken in procession to a body of water and ceremoniously immersed and left to dissolve. This represents Gaṇeśa's merging with the ocean of consciousness. See: *Gaṇeśa.*

Ganges *(Gaṅgā):* गंगा India's most sacred river, 1,557 miles long, arising in the Himalayas above Hardwar under the name Bhagīratha, and named Gaṅgā after joining the Alakanada (where the Sarasvatī is said to join them underground). It flows southeast across the densely populated Gangetic plain, joining its sister Yamunā (or Jumnā) at Prayaga (Allahabad) and ending at the Bay of Bengal.

Gangetic: Near to or on the banks of the Ganges river in North India.

Gāritra: गारित्र "Grains." E.g., wheat or barley.

gāyatrī: गायत्री According with the *gāyatrī* verse form, an ancient meter of 24 syllables, generally as a triplet (tercet) with eight syllables each. From *gāya,* "song."

—*Gāyatrī:* The Vedic Gāyatrī Mantra personified as a Goddess, mother of the four *Vedas.*

Gāyatrī Mantra: गायत्रीमन्त्र 1) Famous Vedic mantra used in pūjā and personal chanting. *Oṁ [bhūr bhuvaḥ svaḥ] tat savitur vareṇyam, bhargo devasya*

dhīmahi, dhiyo yo naḥ prachodayāt. "[O Divine Beings of all three worlds,] we meditate upon the glorious splendor of the Vivifier divine. May He illumine our minds" *(Ṛig Veda* 3.62.10, *Vedic Experience*). This sacred verse is also called the Sāvitrī Mantra, being addressed to Savitri, the Sun as Creator, and is considered a universal mystic formula so significant that it is called Vedamātṛi, "mother of the *Vedas."* 2) Any of a class of special tantric mantras called Gāyatrī. Each addresses a particular Deity.

ghaṇṭā: घण्टा "Bell." Akin to *ghaṇṭ,* "to speak." An important implement in Hindu worship (pūjā), used to chase away *asuras* and summon devas and Gods. See: *pūjā.*

ghee: घी Hindi for clarified butter; *ghṛita* in Sanskrit. Butter that has been boiled and strained. An important sacred substance used in temple lamps and offered in fire ceremony, *yajña*. It is also used as a food with many *āyurvedic* virtues. See: *yajña.*

Girijātmaja: गिरिजात्मज "Born from she who as mountain born." The Gaṇeśa *mūrti* enshrined at the Lenyadhri Cave Temple of Mahārāshṭra.

Goddess: Female representation or manifestation of Divinity; Śakti or Devī. *Goddess* can refer to a female perception or depiction of a causal-plane being (Mahādeva) in its natural state, which is genderless, or it can refer to an astral-plane being residing in a female astral body. To show the Divine's transcendence of sexuality, sometimes God is shown as having qualities of both sexes, e.g., Ardhanārīśvara, "Half-woman God;" or Lord Naṭarāja, who wears a feminine earring in one ear and a masculine one in the other.

God Realization: Direct and personal experience of the Divine within oneself. It can refer to either 1) *savikalpa samādhi* ("enstasy with form") in its various levels, from the experience of inner light to the realization of Satchidānanda, the pure consciousness or primal substance flowing through all form, or 2) *nirvikalpa samādhi* ("enstasy without form"), union with the transcendent Absolute, Paraśiva, the Self God, beyond time, form and space. In *Loving Gaṇeśa,* the expression *God Realization* is used to name both of the above *samādhis,* whereas *Self Realization* refers only to *nirvikalpa samādhi*. See: *samādhi, Self Realization.*

Gods: Mahādevas, "great beings of light." In *Loving Gaṇeśa,* the plural form of *God* refers to extremely advanced beings existing in their self-effulgent soul bodies in the causal plane. The meaning of *Gods* is best seen in the phrase, "God and the Gods," referring to the Supreme God—Śiva—and the Mahādevas who are His creation. See: *Mahādeva.*

goshṭha: गोष्ठ "Cow pen; niche." Also names a small alcove shrine.

grace: "Benevolence, love, giving," from the Latin *gratia*, "favor, goodwill." God's power of revealment, *anugraha* śakti ("kindness, showing favor"), by which souls are awakened to their true, Divine nature. Grace in the unripe stages of the spiritual journey is experienced by the devotee as receiving gifts or boons, often unbidden, from God. The mature soul finds himself surrounded by grace. He sees all of God's actions as grace, whether they be seemingly pleasant and helpful or not. See: *prapatti.*

guṇa: गुण "Strand; quality." The three constituent principles of *prakṛiti,* primal nature. The three *guṇas* are: —***sattva:*** "Purity," quiescent, rarified, translucent, pervasive, reflecting the light of Pure Consciousness. —***rajas:*** "Passion," inherent in energy, movement, action, emotion, life. —***tamas:*** "Darkness," inertia, density, the force of contraction, resistance and dissolution. The *guṇas* are integral to Hindu thought, as all things are composed of the combination of these qualities of nature, including āyurveda, arts, environments and personalities. See: *āyurveda, prakṛiti, tattva.*

guru: गुरु "Weighty one," indicating an authority of great knowledge or skill. A title for a teacher or guide in any subject, such as music, dance, sculpture, but especially religion. For clarity, the term is often preceded by a qualifying prefix. Hence, terms such as *kulaguru* (family teacher), *vīṇāguru (vīṇā* teacher) and *satguru* (spiritual preceptor). According to the *Advayatāraka Upanishad* (14–18), *guru* means "dispeller *(gu)* of darkness *(ru)."* See: *guru bhakti, guru-śishya system, satguru.*

guru bhakti: गुरुभक्ति "Devotion to the teacher." The attitude of humility, love and ideation held by a student in any field of study. In the spiritual realm, the devotee strives to see the guru as his higher Self. By attuning himself to the *satguru's* inner nature and wisdom, the disciple slowly transforms his own nature to ultimately attain the same peace and enlightenment his guru has achieved. See: *guru, guru-śishya system, satguru.*

guru lineage: See: *guru paramparā.*

guru *paramparā:* गुरुपरंपरा "Preceptorial succession" (literally, "from one teacher to another"). A line of spiritual gurus in authentic succession of initiation; the chain of mystical power and authorized continuity, passed from guru to guru. Cf: *sampradāya.*

guru-śishya system: गुरुशिष्य "Master-disciple" system. An important educational system of Hinduism whereby the teacher conveys his knowledge and tradition to a student. The principle of this system is that knowledge, especially subtle or advanced knowledge, is best conveyed through a strong human relationship based on ideals of the student's respect, commitment, devotion and obedience and on personal instruction by which the student eventually masters the knowledge the guru embodies. See: *guru, guru bhakti, satguru.*

Hanumān: हनुमान् (Hindi) "Large jawed." The powerful monkey God-King of the epic, *Rāmāyaṇa,* and the central figure in the famous drama, *Hanumān-Nāṭaka.* The perfect devoted servant to his master, Rāma, this popular Deity is the epitome of *dasya bhakti.*

Hari: हरि "Vishṇu." See: *Brahmā, Vishṇu.*

Haridrā Gaṇapati: हरिद्रागणपति "The golden one" holds four prevalent emblems: noose, goad, tusk and *modaka.*

hatha yoga: हठयोग "Forceful yoga." Haṭha yoga is a system of physical and mental exercise developed in ancient times as a means of preparing the body and mind for meditation. See: *kuṇḍalinī, nāḍī, yoga.*

heaven: The celestial spheres, including the causal plane and the higher realms of the subtle plane, where souls rest and learn between births, and mature souls continue to evolve after *moksha. Heaven* is often used by translators as an equivalent to the Sanskrit *Svarga.* See: *loka.*

hell: *Naraka.* An unhappy, mentally and emotionally congested, distressful area of consciousness. Hell is a state of mind that can be experienced on the plane of physical existence or in the sub-astral plane (Naraka) after the death of the physical body. It is accompanied by the tormented emotions of hatred, remorse, resentment, fear, jealousy and self-condemnation. However, in the Hindu view, the hellish experience is not permanent, but a temporary condition of one's own making. See: *asura, loka.*

Heramba Gaṇapati: हेरम्बगणपति "Protector of the weak" is a five-faced *mūrti* of Gaṇeśa. He rides a lion and gestures protection and blessing.

heritage: A tradition passed down from preceding generations.

higher nature, lower nature: Expressions indicating man's refined, soulful qualities on the one hand, and his base, instinctive qualities on the other. See: *mind (five states).*

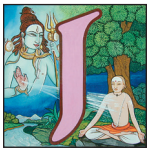
Himālayas: हिमालय "Abode of snow." The mountain system extending along the India-Tibet border and through Pakistan, Nepal and Bhutan.

Hindu: हिन्दु A follower of, or relating to, Hinduism. See: *Hinduism.*

Hinduism (Hindu Dharma): हिन्दुधर्म India's indigenous religious and cultural system, followed today by nearly one billion adherents, mostly in India but with large populations in many other countries. Also called Sanātana Dharma ("Eternal Religion") and Vaidika Dharma, ("Religion of the *Vedas*"). Hinduism is the world's most ancient religion and encompasses a broad spectrum of philosophies ranging from pluralistic theism to absolute monism. It is a family of myriad faiths with four primary denominations: Śaivism, Vaishṇavism, Śāktism and Smārtism. These four hold such divergent beliefs that each is a complete and independent religion. Yet, they share a vast heritage of culture and belief—karma, dharma, reincarnation, all-pervasive Divinity, temple worship, sacraments, manifold Deities, the guru-*śishya* tradition and a reliance on the *Vedas* as scriptural authority.

holy ash: *Vibhūti.* See: *tilaka, tripuṇḍra, vibhūti.*

huṇḍi: हुण्डि "Collection box," from *hun,* "to sacrifice." A strong box inside Hindu temples into which devotees place their contributions.



icchā śakti: इच्छाशक्ति "Desire; will." See: *Śakti, triśūla.*

icon: A sacred image, usually of God or one of the Gods. English for *mūrti.* See: *mūrti.*

iḍā nāḍī: इडानाडी "Soothing channel." The feminine psychic current flowing along the spine. See: *kuṇḍalinī, nāḍī, piṅgalā.*

ikshukāṇḍa: इक्षुकाण्ड "Sugarcane."

ikshukārmuka: इक्षुकार्मुक "Sugarcane bow." A weapon or emblem held by loving Gaṇeśa.

immanent: Indwelling; present and operating within. Relating to God, *immanent* means present in all things and throughout the universe, not aloof or distant.

immolate: Sacrifice. Offer as sacrifice.

implore: To ask, beg, beseech or entreat earnestly or pathetically.

incarnation: From *incarnate*, "made flesh." The soul's taking of repeated physical birth. In some schools, notably Vaishṇavism, God is believed to incarnate in human form to help humanity. This is called avatāra. See: *avatāra, reincarnation.*

incense: *Dhūpa.* Substance that gives off pleasant aromas when burned, usually made from natural derivatives such as tree resin. A central element in Hindu worship rites, waved gently before the Deity as an offering, especially after ablution. Hindi terms include *sugandhi* and *lobāna.* A popular term for stick incense is *agarbatti* (Gujarati). See: *pūjā.*

individuality: Quality that makes one person or soul other than, or different from, another. See: *ahaṁkāra, āṇava mala, ego, soul.*

Indra: इन्द्र "Ruler." Vedic God of rain and thunder, warrior king of the devas.

indriya: इन्द्रिय "Agent, sense organ." The five agents of perception *(jñānendriyas),* hearing *(śrotra),* touch *(tvak),* sight *(chakshus),* taste *(rasana)* and smell *(ghṛāṇa);* and the five agents of action *(karmendriyas),* speech *(vāk),* grasping, by means of the hands *(pāṇi),* movement *(pāda),* excretion *(pāyu)* and generation *(upastha).* See: *kośa, soul, tattva.*

Indus Valley: Region of the Indus River, now in Pakistan, where in 1924 archeologists discovered the remains of a high civilization which flourished

between 5000 and 1000 bce. There, a seal was found with the effigy of Śiva as Paśupati, "Lord of Animals," seated in a yogic posture. Neither the language of these people nor their exact background is known. They related culturally and carried on an extensive trade with peoples of other civilizations far to the West, using sturdy ships that they built themselves. For centuries they were the most advanced civilization on Earth. See: *Śaivism.*

initiation (to initiate): Entering into; admission as a member. In Hinduism, initiation from a qualified preceptor is considered invaluable for spiritual progress. Usually the beginning of more advanced learning.See: *dīkshā.*

instinctive: "Natural or innate." From the Latin *instinctus,* "staff," "prick;" a participle of *instigere,* "impelling," "pricking," "instigating." The drives and impulses that order the animal world and the physical and lower astral aspects of humans—for example, self-preservation, procreation, hunger and thirst, and the emotions of greed, hatred, anger, fear, lust and jealousy.

instinctive mind: *Manas chitta.* The lower mind, which controls the basic faculties of perception and movement as well as ordinary thought and emotion. *Manas chitta* is of the *manomaya kośa.* See: *mind (three phases).*

intellect: The faculty of reason and understanding; power of thought; mental acumen. See: *buddhi, intellectual mind.*

intellectual mind: *Buddhi chitta.* The faculty of reason and logical thinking. It is the source of discriminating thought, rather than the ordinary, impulsive thought processes of the lower or instinctive mind, called *manas chitta. Buddhi chitta* is of the *manomaya kośa.* See: *buddhi, mind (individual).*

internalize: To take something inside of oneself.

internalized worship: Yoga. Worship or contact with God and Gods via meditation and contemplation rather than through external ritual. This is the yogī's path, preceded by the *charyā* and kriyā *pādas.* See: *meditation, yoga.*

intrinsic: Inward, essential; inherent. Belonging to the real nature of a being or thing. **—intrinsic evil:** See: *evil.*

intuition (to intuit): Direct understanding or cognition, which bypasses the process of reason. Intuition is a far superior source of knowing than reason, but it does not contradict reason. See: *cognition, mind (five states).*

invincible: That which cannot be overcome; unconquerable.

invocation (to invoke): A "calling or summoning," as to a God, saint, etc., for blessings and assistance. Also, a formal prayer or chant. See: *mantra.*

ipso facto: "By the fact itself." A result accomplished by the deed itself, e.g. in some faiths declaring oneself apostate means *ipso facto* excommunication.

Iraivan: இறைவன் "Worshipful one; divine one." One of the most ancient Tamil epithets for God. See: *San Mārga Sanctuary.*

Iraivan Temple:-See: *San Mārga Sanctuary.*

Īśa: ईश "Ruler, lord or sovereign."

Ishṭa Devatā: इष्टदेवता "Cherished or chosen Deity." The Deity that is the object of one's special pious attention.

Itihāsa: इतिहास "So it was." Epic history, particularly the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* (of which the famed *Bhagavad Gītā* is a part). This term sometimes refers to the *Purāṇas,* especially the *Skānda Purāṇa* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (or *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam).* See: *Mahābhārata, Rāmāyaṇa, smṛiti.*

jāgrat: जाग्रत् "Wakefulness." The state of mind in which the senses are turned outward. Conscious mind. One of four states of consciousness, *avasthās,* described in the *Māṇḍūkya Upanishad.* See: *avasthā, consciousness.*

jaya: (jai) जय "Victory!"

Jainism: (Jaina) जैन An ancient non-Vedic religion of India made prominent by the teachings of Mahāvīra ("Great Hero"), ca 500 BCE. The Jain *Āgamas* teach reverence for all life, vegetarianism and strict renunciation for ascetics. Jains focus great emphasis on the fact that all souls may attain liberation, each by his own effort. Their great historic saints, called Tīrthaṅkaras ("Ford-Crossers"), are objects of worship, of whom Mahāvīra was the 24th and last. Jains number about six million today, living mostly in India.

jambira: जम्बिर "Lime."

jambu: जम्बु "Rose apple."

japa: जप "Recitation." Practice of concentrated repetition of a mantra, often while counting the repetitions on a *mālā* or strand of beads. It is recommended as a cure for pride and arrogance, anger and jealousy, fear and confusion. It fills the mind with divine syllables, awakening the divine essence of spiritual energies.

japa *mālā:* "Garland for incantation." A strand of beads for holy recitation, japa, usually made of *rudrāksha, tulasī,* sandalwood or crystal.

jātakarma: जातकर्म "Rite of birth." See: *saṁskāra.*

jaṭāmukuṭa: जटामुकुट "Crown of matted hair."

jāti: जाति "Birth; genus; community or caste." See: *varṇa dharma.*

jīva: जीव "Living, existing." From *jīv,* "to live." The individual soul, ātman, during its embodied state, bound by the three *malas (āṇava,* karma and māyā). The *jīvanmukta* is one who is "liberated while living." See: *ātman, evolution of the soul, purusha, soul.*

jñāna: ज्ञान "Knowledge; wisdom." The matured state

of the soul. It is the wisdom that comes as an aftermath of the kuṇḍalinī breaking through the door of Brahman into the realization of Paraśiva, Absolute Reality. Jñāna is the awakened, superconscious state *(kāraṇa chitta).* It is the fruition of the progressive stages of *charyā,* kriyā and yoga in the Śaiva Siddhānta system of spiritual unfoldment. See: *God Realization, samādhi, Self Realization.*

jñāna pāda: ज्ञानपाद "Stage of wisdom." Also names the knowledge section of each *Āgama.* See: *jñāna, pāda.*

jñāna śakti: ज्ञानशक्ति "Knowing power." The universal force of wisdom. See: *Śakti, triśūla.*

jñānendriya: ज्ञानेन्द्रिय "Agent of perception." See: *indriya.*

jurisdiction: A sphere of authority; the territorial range of authority.

jyoti: ज्योति "Light."

jyotisha: ज्योतिष From *jyoti,* "light." "The science of the lights (or stars)." Hindu astrology, the knowledge and practice of analyzing events and circumstances, delineating character and determining auspicious moments, according to the positions and movements of heavenly bodies. In calculating horoscopes, *jyotisha* uses the sidereal (fixed-star) system, whereas Western astrology uses the tropical (fixed-date) method.

kadalīphala: कदलीफल "Banana fruit."

Kailāsa: कैलास "Crystalline" or "Abode of bliss." The four-faced Himalayan peak in Western Tibet; the earthly abode of Lord Śiva. Associated with Mount Meru, the legendary center of the universe, it is an important pilgrimage destination for all Hindus as well as for Tibetan Buddhists. Kailāsa is represented in Śāktism by a certain three-dimensional form of the *Śrī Chakra yantra* (also called *kailāsa* chakra).

Kailāsa Paramparā: कैलासपरंपरा "Crystaline lineage." A spiritual lineage of *siddhas,* a major stream of the Nandinātha Sampradāya, proponents of the ancient philosophy of monistic Śaiva Siddhānta, of whom Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami is the current representative. See also: *Yogaswāmī.*

kalaśa: कलश "Pot;" "pitcher," "jar." In temple rites, a pot of water, *kalaśa,* topped with mango leaves and a husked coconut represents the Deity during special pūjās. *Kalaśa* also names the pot-like spires that adorn temple roofs.

Kali Yuga: कलियुग "Dark Age." The Kali Yuga is the last age in the repetitive cycle of four phases of time the universe passes through. It is comparable to the darkest part of the night, as the forces of ignorance are in full power and many of the subtle faculties of the soul are obscured. See: *yuga.*

kalpavṛiksha: कल्पवृक्ष "Wish-fulfilling tree." An important symbol in Hindu theology.

kāma: काम "Pleasure, love; desire." Cultural, intellectual and sexual fulfillment. One of four human goals, *purushārtha.* See: *purushārtha.*

kamaṇḍalu: कमण्डलु Small water vessel, such as that carried by sannyāsins.

kapittha: कपित्थ "On which monkeys dwell." The wood apple tree, *Limonia acidissima,* native to the dry plains of India and Ceylon and cultivated along roads and edges of fields and occasionally in orchards. The *kapittha* fruit, also known as elephant apple, monkey fruit and *kath bel,* is tough shelled, astringent and renowned for its *āyurvedic* potencies.

kāraṇaloka: "The causal plane," also called Śivaloka, existing deep within the Antarloka at a higher level of vibration, it is a world of superconsciousness and extremely refined energy. See: *loka.*

karaṇḍa mukuṭa: करण्ड मुकुट "Basket-shaped crown." A headdress or crown shaped like a conical basket with the narrow end upwards, often topped with a series of smaller flattened spheres, worn by the Deities.

karma: कर्म "Action, deed." One of the most important principles in Hindu thought, karma refers to 1) any act or deed; 2) the principle of cause and effect; 3) a consequence or "fruit of action" *(karmaphala)* or "after effect" *(uttaraphala),* which sooner or later returns upon the doer. What we sow, we shall reap in this or future lives. Selfish, hateful acts *(pāpakarma* or *kukarma)* will bring suffering. Benevolent actions *(punyakarma* or *sukarma)* will bring loving reactions. Karma is a neutral, self-perpetuating law of the inner cosmos, much as gravity is an impersonal law of the outer cosmos. Karma is threefold: *sañchita, prārabdha* and *kriyamāna.* —***sañchita* karma:** ("Accumulated actions.") The sum of all karmas of this life and past lives. —***prārabdha* karma:** ("Actions begun; set in motion.") That portion of *sañchita* karma that is bearing fruit and shaping the events and conditions of the current life, including the nature of one's bodies, personal tendencies and associations. —***kriyamāna* karma:** ("Being made.") The karma being created and added to *sañchita* in this life (or in the inner worlds between lives) by one's thoughts, words and actions. See: *mala, moksha, sin, soul.*

karma yoga: कर्मयोग "Union through action." Selfless service. See: *yoga.*

karmendriya: कर्मेन्द्रिय "Agent of action." See: *indriya.*

karṇavedha: कर्णवेध "Ear-piercing." See: *saṁskāra.*

karpūra: कर्पूर "Camphor." The white resinous exudation of the camphor tree burned in *āratī* lamps during pūjā. See: *āratī.*

Kārttikeya: कार्त्तिकेय Child of the Pleiades, from *Kṛittikā,* "Pleiades." Second son of Śiva, the brother of Gaṇeśa. A great Mahādeva worshiped in all parts

of India and the world. Also known as Murugan, Kumāra, Skanda, Shaṇmukhanātha, Subrahmaṇya and more, He is the God who guides that part of evolution which is religion, the transformation of the instinctive into a divine wisdom through yoga. He holds the holy *vel* of jñāna śakti, His Power to vanquish ignorance.

karuṇā: करुणा "Compassionate; loving, full of grace."

Kauai: Northernmost of the Hawaiian islands; 555 sq. mi., pop. 50,000.

Kauai Aadheenam: Monastery-temple complex founded by Sivaya Subramuniyaswami in 1970; international headquarters of Śaiva Siddhānta Church.

kavacha: कवच "Armor; covering." A decorative mask-like casing, usually made of silver or gold, that adorns the face, hands or entire Deity image.

kavadi: காவடி A penance offered to Lord Murugan/Kārttikeya, especially during Tai Pusam, consisting of carrying in procession a heavy, beautifully decorated wooden object from which pots of milk hang which are to be used for His *abhisheka*. The penitent's tongue and other parts of the body are often pierced with silver spears or hooks. See: *penance.*

keśānta: केशान्त "Beard-shaving." See: *saṁskāra.*

khaḍga: खड्ग "Sword." A powerful symbol in Hindu iconography, depicting the power of the Gods to aid devotees in overcoming human weaknesses.

kheṭaka: खेटक "Shield." As a religious emblem, it represents protection, divine security and the upholding of dharma.

kīrtana: कीर्तन "Praising." Devotional singing and dancing in celebration of God, Gods and guru. An important form of congregational worship in many Hindu denominations. See: *bhajana.*

kolam: கோலம் Traditional household and priestly art of "drawing" intricate decorative patterns at the entrance to a home or temple or at the site of a religious ceremony. Known as *raṅgoli* in Sanskrit. *Kolam* designs are made with rice powder mixed to a watery paste, and sometimes with flowers and various-colored powdered pulses.

konrai: கொன்றை The Golden Shower tree, *Cassia fistula*; symbol of Śiva's cascading, abundant, golden grace.

kośa: कोश "Sheath; vessel, container; layer." Philosophically, five sheaths through which the soul functions simultaneously in the various planes or levels of existence. ***—annamaya kośa:*** "Sheath composed of food;" the physical or odic body. ***—prāṇamaya kośa:*** "Sheath composed of *prāṇa* (vital force);" also known as the *prāṇic* or health body, or the etheric body or etheric double. ***—manomaya kośa:*** "Mind-formed sheath;" the lower astral body (from *manas,* "thought, will, wish"); the instinctive-intellectual sheath of ordinary thought, desire and emotion. ***—vijñānamaya kośa:*** "Sheath of cognition;" the mental or cognitive-intuitive sheath, also called the actinodic sheath. ***—ānandamaya kośa:*** "Body of bliss;" the intuitive-superconscious sheath or actinic-causal body. *Ānandamaya kośa* is not a sheath in the same sense as the four outer *kośas.* It is the soul itself, a body of light, also called *kāraṇa śarīra,* causal body, and *karmāśaya,* holder of karmas of this and all past lives. *Ānandamaya kośa* is that which evolves through all incarnations and beyond until the soul's ultimate, fulfilled merger, *viśvagrāsa,* in the Primal Soul, Parameśvara. Then *ānandamaya kośa* becomes Śivamayakośa, the body of God Śiva.

kraal: An enclosure for livestock (Afrikaans).

Kṛishṇa: कृष्ण "Black." Also related to *kṛishṭiḥ,* meaning "drawing, attracting." One of the most popular Gods of the Hindu pantheon. He is worshiped by Vaishṇavas as the eighth avatāra, incarnation, of Vishṇu. He is best known as the Supreme Personage depicted in the *Mahābhārata,* and specifically in the *Bhagavad Gītā.* For Gauḍīya Vaishṇavism, Kṛishṇa is the Godhead.

kriyā: क्रिया "Action." In a general sense, kriyā can refer to doing of any kind. Specifically, it names religious action, especially rites or ceremonies. In yoga terminology, kriyā names involuntary physical movements caused by the arousal of the *kuṇḍalinī.* See: *pāda.*

kriyā pāda: क्रियापाद "Stage of religious action; worship." The stage of worship and devotion, second of four progressive stages of maturation on the Śaiva Siddhānta path of attainment. See: *pāda.*

kriyā śakti: क्रियाशक्ति "Action power." The universal force of doing. See: *Śakti, triśūla.*

krodha: क्रोध "Anger." The emotion of the second chakra below the *mūlādhāra,* called *vitala.* Scripture describes it as one of the gates to hell.

kshatriya: क्षत्रिय "Governing; sovereign." The social class of lawmakers, law-enforcers and the military. See: *varṇa dharma.*

kshetra: क्षेत्र "Place," "field." A property or region; often naming a sacred place.

Kshipra Gaṇapati: क्षिप्रगणपति A name and traditional *mūrti*, or form, of Gaṇeśa. "He who is immediate" (or quick). He holds a *kalpavṛiksha* sprig and a pot of gems.

Kshipra Prasāda Gaṇapati: क्षिप्रप्रसाद गणपति "The quick rewarder" presides from a *kusha*-grass throne holding pomegranate, noose, goad and more.

kukarma: कुकर्म "Unwholesome acts" or the fruit therefrom. See: *karma, pāpa.*

kulaguru: कुलगुरु "Family preceptor or teacher." The *kulaguru* guides the joint and extended family, particularly through the heads of families, and provides spiritual education. He may or may not be a *satguru.*

Kulārṇava Tantra: कुलार्णवतन्त्र A leading scripture of the Kaula school of Śāktism. It comprises 17 chapters totaling 2,058 verses which focus on ways to

liberation, with notable chapters on the *guru-śishya* relationship.

Kumāra: कुमार "Virgin youth; ever-youthful." A name of Lord Kārttikeya as a perpetual bachelor. See: *Kārttikeya.*

kumbha: कुम्भ "Water vessel," Another name for *kalaśa*, a pot of water on which a husked coconut is nested on five mango leaves to represent the Deity; integral to certain sacred Hindu rites.

kumārī: कुमारी "Ever youthful." A young virgin girl, particularly age 10-12.

kumbhābhisheka: कुम्भाभिषेक "Water-pot ablution." The formal consecration of a new temple and its periodic reconsecration, usually at twelve-year intervals, following renovation, extensive cleaning and renewal. The rites culminate with the priests' pouring sanctified water over the temple spires, which resemble an inverted pot, or *kumbha.*

kuṇḍalinī: कुण्डलिनी "She who is coiled; serpent power." The primordial cosmic energy in every individual which, at first, lies coiled like a serpent at the base of the spine and eventually, through the practice of yoga, rises up the *sushumṇā nāḍī.* As it rises, the kuṇḍalinī awakens each successive chakra. *Nirvikalpa samādhi,* enlightenment, comes as it pierces through the door of Brahman at the core of the *sahasrāra* and enters. See: *chakra, samādhi, nāḍī.*

kuṅkuma: कुंकुम "Saffron; red." The red powder, made of turmeric and lime, worn by Hindus as the *pottu,* dot, at the point of the third eye on the forehead. Names the saffron plant, *Crocus sativus,* and its pollen.

kuttuvilaku: குத்துவிளக்கு A standing lamp *(dīpastambha* in Sanskrit) found in the temple, shrine room or home. See: *dīpastambha.*

laḍḍu: लड्डु A sweet made with milk, flour and sugar in South India, and with chickpea flour, ghee and sugar in North India.

Lakshmī: लक्ष्मी "Mark or sign," often of success or prosperity. Śakti, the Universal Mother, as Goddess of wealth. The mythological consort of Vishṇu. Usually depicted on a lotus flower. Prayers are offered to Lakshmī for wealth, beauty and peace. —***Dhānya Lakshmī:*** *"Bestower of wealth."* See: *Goddess, Śakti.*

Lakshmī Gaṇapati: लक्ष्मीगणपति A name and traditional *mūrti*, or form, of Gaṇeśa. "Lord of abundance." Flanked by Wisdom and Achievement (Buddhi and Siddhi) and holds a green parrot, *śukhi.*

Lambodara: लम्बोदर "Large belly." A name of Lord Gaṇeśa cited in the *Mudgala Purāṇa* as the conqueror of *krodha,* anger.

left-handed: *Vāma mārga.* A term describing certain tantric practices in which the instincts and intellect are transcended and detachment is sought through practices and behavior contrary to orthodox social norms. See: *tantra, tantric, tantrism.*

liberation: *Moksha*, release from the bonds of *pāśa,* after which the soul is liberated from saṁsāra (the round of births and deaths). In Śaiva Siddhānta, *pāśa* is the three-fold bondage of *āṇava,* karma and māyā, which limit and confine the soul to the reincarnational cycle so that it may evolve. *Moksha* is freedom from the fettering power of these bonds, which do not cease to exist, but no longer have the power to fetter or bind the soul. See: *mala, moksha, reincarnation, Self Realization.*

līlā: लीला "Play." Ease or facility in doing. A term used to describe God's Divine cosmic drama of creation, preservation, dissolution, concealment and revelation.

liturgy: The proper, prescribed forms of ritual.

lobha: लोभ "Greed." One of the principal obstacles on the path, counteracted by *dāna* (selfless giving) and *aparigraha,* greedlessness. See: *Gajānana.*

loka: लोक "World, habitat, realm, or plane of existence." From *loc,* "to shine, be bright, visible." A dimension of manifest existence; cosmic region. Each *loka* reflects or involves a particular range of consciousness. The three primary *lokas* are 1) —***Bhūloka:*** "Earth world." The world perceived through the five senses, also called the gross plane, as it is the most dense of the worlds. Sometimes referred to as the First World. 2) —***Antarloka:*** "Inner" or "in-between world." Known in English as the subtle or astral plane, the intermediate dimension between the physical and causal worlds, where souls in their astral bodies sojourn between incarnations and when they sleep. Also referred to as the Second World. 3) —***Śivaloka:*** "World of Śiva," and of the Gods and highly evolved souls. The causal plane, also called Kāraṇaloka, existing deep within the Antarloka at a higher level of vibration. It is a world of superconsciousness and extremely refined energy, the plane of creativity and intuition, the quantum level of the universe where souls exist in self-effulgent bodies made of actinic particles of light. It is here that God and Gods move and lovingly guide the evolution of all the worlds and shed their ever-flowing grace. Its vibratory rate is that of the *viśuddha, ājñā* and *sahasrāra* chakras and those above. Also referred to as the Third World. See: *three worlds.*

lustration: Ritual cleansing.

macrocosm: "Great world or universe." See: *microcosm-macrocosm, three worlds.*

madhukumbha: मधुकुम्भ "Honey vessel."

madhyama vāk: मध्यमवाक् "Intermediate word." See: *vāk.*

Madurai: City in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu; home of one of the world's most magnificent Śaivite temples, called Meenakshi-Sundaresvara.

mahā: महा An adjective or prefix meaning "great."

Mahā Gaṇapati: महागणपति "The great one." A classical *mūrti* accompanied by one of His śaktis. He holds a pomegranate, blue lily and a pot of gems.

Mahābhārata: महाभारत "Great Epic of India." The world's longest epic poem. It revolves around the conflict between two royal families, the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas, and their great battle of Kurukshetra near modern Delhi in approximately 1424 BCE. Woven through the plot are countless discourses on philosophy, religion, astronomy, cosmology, polity and economics as well as many stories illustrative of simple truths and ethical principles. The *Bhagavad Gītā* is one section of the work. The *Mahābhārata* is revered as scripture by Vaishṇavites and Smārtas. See: *Bhagavad Gītā.*

Mahādeva: महादेव "Great shining one; God." Referring either to God Śiva or any of the highly evolved beings who live in the Śivaloka in their natural, effulgent soul bodies. God Śiva in His perfection as Primal Soul is one of the Mahādevas, yet He is unique and incomparable in that He alone is uncreated, the Father-Mother and Destiny of all other Mahādevas. He is called Parameśvara, "Supreme God." He is the Primal Soul, whereas the other Gods are individual souls. See: *Gods, Parameśvara, Śiva.*

mahākāraṇa: महाकारण The Great Causality." See: *vāk.*

mahāparaśu: महापरशु "Great axe."

mahāpralaya: महाप्रलय "Great dissolution." Total annihilation of the universe at the end of a *mahākalpa.* It is the absorption of all existence, including time, space and individual consciousness, all the *lokas* and their inhabitants into God Śiva, as the water of a river returns to its source, the sea. Then Śiva alone exists in His three perfections, until He again issues forth creation. During this incredibly vast period there are many partial dissolutions, *pralayas*, when either the Bhūloka and/or the Antarloka are destroyed.

mahārāja: महाराज "Great king." Indian monarch. Title of respect for political or (in modern times) spiritual leaders.

Mahārāshṭra: महाराष्ट्र Central state of modern India whose capital is Mumbai (Bombay). Area 118,717 square miles, population 63 million.

mahāsamādhi: महासमाधि "Great enstasy." The death, or dropping off of the physical body, of a great soul, an event occasioned by tremendous blessings. Also names the shrine in which the remains of a great soul are entombed. —***Mahāsamādhi* day** names the anniversary of a great soul's transition. See also: *cremation, death.*

mahātala: महातल "Vast netherworld." The sixth lowest astral world. Region of consciencelessness. See: *chakra.*

mahātmā: महात्मा "Great soul." Honorific title given to people held in high esteem, especially saints. See: *ātman.*

mahāvākya: महावाक्य "Great saying." An aphorism from scripture or a holy person. Most famous are four Upanishadic proclamations: *Prajñānam Brahma* ("Pure consciousness is God"—*Aitareya U.), Aham Brahmāsmi* ("I am God"—*Bṛihadāraṇyaka U.), Tat tvam asi* ("Thou art That"—*Çhandogya U.)* and *Ayam ātma Brahma* ("The soul is God"—*Māṇḍūkya U.).*

Mahodara: महोदर "Big-bellied." Gaṇeśa's aspect as the dispeller of *moha,* infatuation or delusion.

mala: मल "Impurity." An important term in Śaivism referring to three bonds, called *pāśa—āṇava*, karma, and māyā—which limit the soul, preventing it from knowing its true, divine nature. See: *liberation, pāśa.*

mālā: माला "Garland." A strand of beads for holy recitation, japa, usually made of *rudrāksha, tulasī,* sandalwood or crystal. Also a flower garland.

mamatā: ममता "Egoity, self-interest, selfishness."

manas: मनस् "Mind; understanding." The lower or instinctive mind, seat of desire and governor of sensory and motor organs, called *indriyas. Manas* is termed the undisciplined, empirical mind. *Manas* is characterized by desire, determination, doubt, faith, lack of faith, steadfastness, lack of steadfastness, shame, intellection and fear. It is a faculty of *manomaya kośa,* the lower astral or instinctive-intellectual sheath. See: *awareness, indriya, instinctive mind, kośa, mind (individual).*

maṇḍapa: मण्डप From *maṇḍ,* "to deck, adorn." Temple precinct; a temple compound, open hall or chamber. In entering a large temple, one passes through a series of *maṇḍapas,* each named according to its position, e.g., *mukhamaṇḍapa,* "front chamber." In some temples, *maṇḍapas* are concentrically arranged. See: *temple.*

mandira: मन्दिर "Abode." A temple or shrine; sanctuary. See: *temple.*

Māṇḍūkya Upanishad: माण्डूक्य उपनिषद् A "principal" *Upanishad* (belonging to the *Atharva Veda*) which, in 12 concise verses, teaches of Aum and the four states *(avasthā)* of awareness: waking *(viśva),* dreaming *(taijasa)*, dreamless sleep *(prājña)* and transcendent, spiritual consciousness *(turīya).*

***maṇipūra* chakra:** मणिपूरचक्र "Wheeled city of jewels." Solar-plexus center of willpower. See: *chakra.*

Manikkavasagar: மாணிக்கவாசகர் "He of ruby-like utterances." Tamil saint who contributed to the medieval Śaivite renaissance (ca 850). He gave up his position as prime minister to follow a renunciate life. His poetic *Tiruvasagam,* "Holy Utterances"—a major Śaiva Siddhānta scripture (part of the eighth *Tirumurai)* and a jewel of Tamil literature—express

his aspirations, trials and yogic realizations.

mānsāhārī: मांसाहारी "Meat-eater." Those who follow a non-vegetarian diet. See: *meat-eater, vegetarian.*

mantra: मन्त्र "Mystic formula." A sound, syllable, word or phrase endowed with special power, usually drawn from scripture. Mantras are chanted loudly during pūjā to invoke the Gods and establish a force field. To be truly effective, such mantras must be given by the preceptor through initiation.

mārga: मार्ग "Path; way." From *mārg,* "to seek." See: *pāda.*

Markali Pillaiyar: மார்கழி பிள்ளையார் A month-long, December-January (Markali) festival to Gaṇeśa in the form of Lord Pillaiyar, the Noble Child. Worship, prayer and other spiritual disciplines are commenced during this special period of *sādhana,* and the home is cleaned thoroughly each day.

materialism (materialistic): The doctrine that matter is the only reality, that all life, thought and feelings are but the effects of movements of matter, and that there exist no worlds but the physical. See: *worldly.*

materialist: One who believes that physical comfort, pleasure and wealth are the only or the highest goals of life; that matter is the only reality.

mātṛikākshara: मातृकाक्षर A syllable of the Sanskrit alphabet (numbering 51). From *mātṛika,* "little mother," and *akshara,* "imperishable," immutable," hence "syllable."

mātsarya: मात्सर्य "Jealousy."

maya: मय "Consisting of; made of," as in *manomaya,* "made of mind."

māyā: माया From the verb root *mā,* "to measure," "to limit," "give form." The principle of appearance or manifestation of God's power or "mirific energy," "that which measures." The substance emanated from Śiva through which the world of form is manifested. Hence all creation is also termed māyā. It is the cosmic creative force, the principle of manifestation, ever in the process of creation, preservation and dissolution. See: *loka, mind (universal).*

mayūra: मयूर "Peacock." The *vāhana,* or mount, of Lord Kārttikeya, symbolizing effulgent beauty and religion in full glory. The peacock is able to control powerful snakes, such as the cobra, symbolizing the soulful domination of the instinctive elements—or control of the kuṇḍalinī, which is yoga. See: *Kārttikeya, vāhana.*

Mayūreśvara: मयूरेश्वर "Peacock Lord." The Gaṇeśa *mūrti* enshrined at the Morgaon Temple south of Pune, Mahārāshṭra.

meandering: Tortuous, winding back and forth.

meat-eater: *Mānsāhārī.* Those who follow a nonvegetarian diet. See: *vegetarianism.*

meditation: *Dhyāna.* Sustained concentration. Meditation describes a quiet, alert, powerfully concentrated state wherein new knowledge and insights are awakened from within as awareness focuses one-pointedly on an object or specific line of thought. See: *rāja yoga, yoga.*

mediumship: Act or practice of serving as a channel through which beings of inner worlds communicate with humans. See: *folk-shamanic, trance.*

menses: A woman's monthly menstruation period, during which, by Hindu tradition, she rests from her usual activities and forgoes public and family religious functions.

mentor: One who advises, teaches, instructs, either formally or informally.

merge: To lose distinctness or identity by being absorbed. To unite or become one with.

merger of the soul: See: *evolution of the soul, viśvagrāsa.*

metabolism: The system of physical and chemical processes occurring within a living cell or organism that are necessary for the maintenance of life. The life processes, consisting of anabolism (the changing of food into living tissue) and catabolism (the degeneration of living tissue).

microcosm-macrocosm: "Little world" or "miniature universe" as compared with "great world." *Microcosm* refers to the internal source of something larger or more external (macrocosm). In Hindu cosmology, the outer world is a macrocosm of the inner world, which is its microcosm and is mystically larger and more complex than the physical universe and functions at a higher rate of vibration and even a different rate of time. The microcosm precedes the macrocosm. Thus, the guiding principle of the Bhūloka comes from the Antarloka and Śivaloka. Consciousness precedes physical form. In the tantric tradition, the body of man is viewed as a microcosm of the entire divine creation. "Microcosm-macrocosm" is embodied in the terms *piṇḍa* and *aṇḍa.* See: *quantum, tantra, tattva.*

millennium: A period of 1,000 years. **millennia:** Plural of millennium.

mind (ve states): A view of the mind in five parts. —**conscious mind** (*Jāgrat chitta,* "wakeful consciousness"): The ordinary, waking, thinking state of mind in which the majority of people function most of the day. —**subconscious mind** (*Saṁskāra chitta,* "impression mind"): The part of mind "beneath" the conscious mind, the storehouse or recorder of all experience (whether remembered consciously or not)—the holder of past impressions, reactions and desires. Also, the seat of involuntary physiological processes. —**subsubconscious mind** (*Vāsanā chitta,* "mind of subliminal traits"): The area of the subconscious mind formed when two thoughts or experiences of the same rate of intensity are sent into the subconscious at different times and, intermingling, give rise to a new and totally different rate of vibration. This subconscious formation later causes the external mind to react to situations

according to these accumulated vibrations, be they positive, negative or mixed. —**superconscious mind** *(Kāraṇa chitta):* The mind of light, the all-knowing intelligence of the soul. At its deepest level, the superconscious is Parāśakti, or Satchidānanda, the Divine Mind of God Śiva. —**subsuperconscious mind** *(Anukāraṇa chitta):* The superconscious mind working through the conscious and subconscious states, which brings forth intuition, clarity and insight. See: *chitta, consciousness, saṁskāra.*

mind (individual): At the microcosmic level of individual souls, mind is consciousness and its faculties of memory, desire, thought and cognition. Individual mind is *chitta,* "mind, consciousness" and its three-fold expression is called *antaḥkaraṇa,* "inner faculty," composed of: 1) *buddhi* ("intellect, reason, logic," higher mind); 2) *ahaṁkāra* ("I-maker," egoity); 3) *manas* ("lower mind," instinctive-intellectual mind, the seat of desire).

mind (three phases): A perspective of mind as instinctive, intellectual and superconscious. —**instinctive mind** *(Manas chitta):* the seat of desire and governor of sensory and motor organs. —**intellectual mind** *(Buddhi chitta):* the faculty of thought and intelligence. —**superconscious mind** *(Kāraṇa chitta):* the strata of intuition, benevolence and spiritual sustenance. Its most refined essence is Parāsakti, or Satchidānanda, all-knowing, omnipresent consciousness, the One transcendental, self-luminous, divine mind common to all souls. See: *consciousness, mind (five states).*

mind (universal): In the most profound sense, mind is the sum of all things, all energies and manifestations, all forms, subtle and gross, sacred and mundane. It is the inner and outer cosmos. Mind is māyā. It is the material matrix. It is everything but That, the Self within, Paraśiva. See: *chitta, consciousness, māyā.*

miri c: "Wonder-making, magical, astonishing."

mlecçha: म्लेच्छ "One who speaks indistinctly (like a foreigner)." A foreigner or barbarian, one who does not conform to Hindu culture; a non-Hindu.

moda: मोद "Arrogance." Gaṇeśa's aspect as the conqueror of *mamata,* egoity.

modaka: मोदक "Sweets." A round lemon-sized sweet made of rice, coconut, sugar, etc. It is a favorite treat of Gaṇeśa. Esoterically, it corresponds to siddhi (attainment or fulfillment), the gladdening contentment of pure joy, the sweetest of all things sweet. See: *Gaṇeśa.*

modakapātra: मोदकपात्र "Bowl of sweets." The *modaka,* loving Gaṇeśa's favorite sweet, represents all good things, especially *moksha,* liberation.

moha: मोह् "Infatuation, delusion."

moksha: मोक्ष "Liberation." Release from transmigration, saṁsāra, the round of births and deaths, which occurs after karma has been resolved and *nirvikalpa samādhi*—realization of the Self, Paraśiva—has been attained. Same as *mukti.* See: *kuṇḍalinī, liberation.*

monastic: A monk or nun (based on the Greek *monos,* "alone"). A man or woman who has withdrawn from the world and lives an austere, religious life, either alone or with others in a monastery. (Not to be confused with *monistic,* having to do with the doctrine of monism.) A monastery-dweller is a *maṭhavāsi,* and *sādhu* is a rough equivalent for mendicant. See: *sannyāsin.*

monism: "Doctrine of oneness." 1) The philosophical view that there is only one ultimate substance or principle. 2) The view that reality is a unified whole without independent parts. See: *advaita.*

monistic: Expressive of the belief that reality is of one kind or substance.

monistic theism: Advaita Īśvaravāda. Monism is the doctrine that reality is a one whole or existence without independent parts. Theism is the belief that God exists as a real, conscious, personal Supreme Being. Monistic theism is the dipolar doctrine, also called panentheism, that embraces both monism and theism, two perspectives ordinarily considered contradictory or mutually exclusive, since theism implies dualism. Monistic theism simultaneously accepts that 1) God has a personal form, 2) that He creates, pervades and *is* all that exists, and 3) that He ultimately transcends all existence and that the soul is, in essence, one with God. See: *advaita, theism.*

monotheism: "Doctrine of one God." Contrasted with polytheism, meaning belief in many Gods. The term *monotheism* covers a wide range of philosophical positions, from exclusive (or pure) monotheism, which recognizes only one God (such as in Semitic faiths), to inclusive monotheism, which also accepts the existence of other Gods. Generally speaking, the denominations of Hinduism are inclusively monotheistic in their belief in a one Supreme God and in their reverence for other Gods, or Mahādevas.

mṛidaṅga: मृदङ्ग A kind of Indian drum, barrel-shaped and two-headed.

***mṛigi* mudrā:** मृगि मुद्रा "Deer gesture." The right hand is held in the shape of the profile of a deer's head: the thumb, second finger and third finger touching to form the upper jaw, and the first and fourth fingers kept straight, forming the ears. During pūjā a flower is held in this mudrā (in the "deer's mouth," facing outward) to sprinkle water and waft food essences toward the Deity.

mudgara: मुद्गर "A hammer or mallet." An emblem of arts and crafts, also a weapon in Hindu iconography.

mudrā: मुद्रा "Seal." Esoteric hand gestures which express specific energies or powers. Usually accompanied by precise visualizations, mudrās are a vital element of ritual worship (pūjā), dance and yoga. Among the best-known mudrās are: 1) *abhaya*

mudrā (gesture of fearlessness), in which the fingers are extended, palm facing forward; 2) *añjali* mudrā (gesture of reverence); 3) jñāna mudrā (also known as *chin* mudrā and yoga mudrā), in which the thumb and index finger touch, forming a circle, with the other fingers extended; 4) *dhyāna* mudrā (seal of meditation), in which the two hands are open and relaxed with the palms up, resting on the folded legs, the right hand atop the left with the tips of the thumbs gently touching. See: *abhaya mudrā, añjali mudrā, haṭha yoga, namaskāra.*

mukti: मुक्ति "Release." A synonym for *moksha*. See: *moksha.*

***mūlādhāra* chakra:** मूलाधारचक्र "Root support center," from *mūla,* "root," and *ādhāra,* "supporting." The psychic center located at the base of the spine and governing memory, time and space. The first of seven nerve plexuses or centers of force and consciousness in the psychic nerve system of man, located along the spinal column from its base to the cranial chamber. Loving Gaṇeśa, seated on the four-petalled *mūlādhāra,* rules memory and knowledge as gatekeeper to the six chakras above and as guard of the seven below.

mūlaka: मूलक "Radish."

mūrti: मूर्ति "Form; manifestation, embodiment, personification." An image or icon of God or one of the many Gods used during worship. *Mūrtis* range from aniconic *(avyakta,* "nonmanifest"), such as the Śivaliṅga, to *vyakta* "fully manifest," e.g., anthropomorphic images such as Naṭarāja. In-between is the partially manifest *(vyaktāvyakta),* e.g., the *mukha liṅga,* in which the face of Śiva appears on the Śivaliṅga. Other Deity representations include symbols, e.g., the banyan tree, and geometric designs such as *yantras* and *maṇḍalas. Svayambhū* names a *mūrti* discovered in nature and not carved or crafted by human hands. Another important term for the Deity icon or idol is *pratimā,* "reflected image." See: *Iṣṭa Devatā.*

Murugan: முருகன் "Beautiful one," a favorite name of Kārttikeya among the Tamils of South India, Sri Lanka and elsewhere. See: *Kārttikeya.*

mūshika: मूषिक From *mūsh*, "to steal." The mouse, Lord Gaṇeśa's mount, traditionally associated with abundance. Symbolically, the mouse carries Lord Gaṇeśa's grace into every corner of the mind. See: *Gaṇeśa, vāhana.*

nāda: नाद "Sound; tone, vibration." Metaphysically, the mystic sounds of the Eternal, of which the highest is the transcendent or Soundless Sound, Paranāda, the first vibration from which creation emanates. From Paranāda comes Praṇava, Aum, and further evolutes of *nāda.* These are experienced by the meditator as the *nādanāḍī* śakti, "the energy current of sound," heard pulsing through the nerve system as a constant high-pitched *hum,* much like a *tambūra*, an electrical transformer, a swarm of bees or a *śruti* box. Most commonly, *nāda* refers to ordinary sound. See: *Aum, Śiva consciousness.*

nāḍī: नाडी "Conduit;" "river." A nerve fiber or energy channel of the subtle (inner) bodies of man. It is said there are 72,000. These interconnect the chakras. The three main *nāḍīs* are named *iḍā, piṅgalā* and *sushumṇā. —**iḍā:*** Also known as *chandra* ("moon") *nāḍī*, it is pink in color and flows downward, ending on the left side of the body. This current is feminine in nature and is the channel of physical-emotional energy. *—**piṅgalā:*** Also known as *sūrya* ("sun") *nāḍī*, it is blue in color and flows upward, ending on the right side of the body. This current is masculine in nature and is the channel of intellectual-mental energy. *—**sushumṇā:*** The major nerve current which passes through the spinal column from the *mūlādhāra* chakra at the base to the *sahasrāra* at the crown of the head. It is the channel of kuṇḍalinī. Through yoga, the kuṇḍalinī energy lying dormant in the *mūlādhāra* is awakened and made to rise up this channel through each chakra to the *sahasrāra* chakra. See: *chakra, kuṇḍalinī, rāja yoga, tantrism.*

nāga: नाग "Serpent," often the cobra; symbol of the kuṇḍalinī coiled on the four petals of the *mūlādhāra* chakra. See: *kuṇḍalinī, mūlādhāra chakra.*

nāgapāśa: नागपाश "Snake cord," worn by Gaṇeśa in His various *mūrtis,* both as a waistband and as a sacred thread *(yajñopavīta)*, representing mastery of the life forces and transmutation of instinctiveness into spirituality.

nāgasvara: नागस्वर "Snake note." A double-reed woodwind about three feet long, similar to an oboe but more shrill and piercing, common in South India, played at Hindu pūjās and processions with the *tavil,* a large drum.

naivedya: नैवेद्य Food offered to the Deity at the temple or home altar. An important element in pūjā. See: *prasāda, pūjā.*

nakshatra: नक्षत्र "Star cluster." Central to astrological determinations, the *nakshatras* are 27 star-clusters, constellations, which lie along the ecliptic, or path of the sun. An individual's *nakshatra,* or birth star, is the constellation the moon was aligned with at the time of his birth. See: *jyotisha.*

namaḥ: नमः "Adoration (or homage) to."

Namaḥ Śivāya: नमः शिवाय "Adoration (or homage) to Śiva." The supreme mantra of Śaivism, known as the *Pañchākshara* or "five syllables." *Na* is the Lord's veiling grace; *Ma* is the world; *Śi* is Śiva; *Vā* is His revealing grace; *Ya* is the soul. The letters also represent the physical body: *Na* the legs, *Ma* the stomach, *Śi* the shoulders, *Vā* the mouth and *Ya* the eyes.

Embodying the essence of Śaiva Siddhānta, it is found in the center of the central *Veda* (the *Yajur)* of the original three *Vedas (Ṛig, Yajur* and *Sāma)*—*Kṛishṇa Yajur Veda, Taittirīya Saṁhitā* 4.5.8.

nāmakaraṇa: नामकरण "Name giving." See: *saṁskāra.*

namaskār: नमस्कार् "Reverent salutations." Traditional Hindu verbal greeting and mudrā where the palms are joined together and held before the heart or raised to the level of the forehead. The mudrā is also called *añjali.*

namaste: नमस्ते "Reverent salutations to you." A traditional verbal greeting. A form of *namas,* meaning "bowing, obeisance." See: *namaskāra.*

Nandī: नन्दी "The joyful." A white bull with a black tail, the *vāhana,* or mount, of Lord Śiva, symbol of the powerful instinctive force tamed by Him. Nandī is the perfect devotee, the soul of man, kneeling humbly before God Śiva, ever concentrated on Him. The ideal and goal of the Śiva *bhakta* is to behold Śiva in everything. See: *vāhana.*

Nandinātha Sampradāya: नन्दिनाथसंप्रदय See: *Nātha Sampradāya.*

Naraka: नरक Abode of darkness. Literally, "pertaining to man." The nether worlds. Equivalent to the Western term *hell,* a gross region of the Antarloka. Naraka is a congested, distressful area where demonic beings and young souls may sojourn until they resolve the darksome karmas they have created. Here beings suffer the consequences of their own misdeeds in previous lives. *Naraka* is understood as having seven regions, called *tala,* corresponding to the states of consciousness of the seven lower chakras as follows: 1) Put, "childless" (*atala* chakra, "wheel of the bottomless region"): Fear and lust (located in the hips). 2) Avīchi, "joyless" (*vitala* chakra: "wheel of negative region"): Center of anger (thighs). 3) Saṁhāta, "abandoned" (*sutala* chakra: "Great depth"): Region of jealousy (knees). 4) Tāmisra, "darkness" (*talātala* chakra: "wheel of the lower region"): Realm of confused thinking (calves). 5) Ṛijīsha, "expelled" (*rasātala* chakra: "wheel of subterranean region"): Selfishness (ankles). 6) Kuḍmala, "leprous" (*mahātala chakra:* "wheel of the great lower region"): Region of consciencelessness (feet). The intensity of "hell" begins at this deep level. 7) Kākola, "black poison" (*pātāla* chakra, "wheel of the fallen or sinful level"): Region of malice (soles of the feet). See: *hell, loka, tala (also, individual tala entries).*

nārikela: नारिकेल "Coconut." In front of Gaṇeśa shrines the world over, husked coconuts are broken as an act of prayer, symbolizing the ego's shattering to reveal the soul's innate sweet, pure nature. The coconut, circled by five mango leaves, nested on a pot of water, is worshiped as a Deity image, especially as Lord Gaṇeśa, during certain pūjā rites.

Naṭarāja: नटराज "King of Dance," or "King of Dancers." God as the Cosmic Dancer. Perhaps Hinduism's richest and most eloquent symbol, Naṭarāja represents Śiva, the Primal Soul, Parameśvara, as the power, energy and life of all that exists. This is Śiva's intricate state of Being in Manifestation. See: *nāda, Parameśvara, Parāśakti, Paraśiva.*

Natchintanai: நற்சிந்தனை "Good thoughts." The collected songs of Sage Yogaswāmī (1872–1964) of Jaffna, Sri Lanka, extolling the power of the *satguru,* worship of Lord Śiva, the path of dharma and the attainment of Self Realization.

Nātha: नाथ "Master, lord; adept." Names an ancient Himalayan tradition of Śaiva-yoga mysticism, whose first historically known exponent was Nandikeśvara (ca 250 bce). *Nātha*—Self-Realized adept—designates the extraordinary ascetic masters (or devotees) of this school. The *Nāthas* are considered the source of *haṭha* as well as *rāja yoga.*

Nātha Sampradāya: नाथसंप्रदय "Transmitted doctrine (or theology) of the masters." *Sampradāya* means a living stream of tradition or theology. Nātha Sampradāya is a philosophical and yogic tradition of Śaivism whose origins are unknown. This oldest of Śaivite *sampradāyas* existing today consists of two major streams: the Nandinātha and the Ādinātha. See: *Kailāsa Paramparā, Nātha, Śaivism, sampradāya.*

Nayanar: நாயனார் "One who shows the way." The 63 canonized Tamil saints of South India, as documented in the *Periyapurāṇam* by Sekkilar (ca 1140). All but a few were householders, honored as exemplars of radical devotion to Lord Śiva, though their biographies are perhaps historically inaccurate and the actions of some were violent, even heinous. Several contributed to the Śaiva Siddhānta scriptural compendium called *Tirumurai.*

negative attachment: A fear, worry or doubt of the future or a lingering regret about the past that keeps one from "flowing with the river of life" (living fully in the moment as an independent, spiritual being, facing each experience in the light of understanding).

nervine: An ingestive substance that strengthens activity of the nervous system, such as stimulants and sedatives.

nīlapadma: नीलपद्म "Blue water lily."

Nirguṇa Brahman: निर्गुणब्रह्मन् "God without qualities." See: *Brahman.*

nityavāk: नित्यवाक् "The eternal Word." An expression from the *Vedas* describing the primal sound, the Word, the first impulse of creation. See: *vāk.*

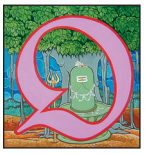
niyama: नियम "Restraint." See: *yama-niyama.*

nondualism: "Not two-ness." Monistic philosophy. See: *advaita, monism, monistic theism, Vedānta.*

Nṛitya Gaṇapati: नृत्यगणपति A name and traditional *mūrti*, or form, of Gaṇeśa. "He who is dancing,"a four-armed golden *mūrti* under a *kalpavṛiksha,*

wish-fulfilling, tree.

nurture: To raise or promote development, train; educate or foster.



occult: Hidden, secret; revealed only after initiation.

olai: ஓலை "Leaf." An ancient form of Indian books used in South India, made of strips of fronds from the palmyra *(tṛiṇḍruma)* and talipot (*tālapatra,* "fan-leaf") palms. Prepared birch bark *(bhūrja patra)* was the medium in the North. These books are average about 2 inches high and 8 inches wide and up to 11 or 12 inches thick, wound with string and generally protected in colored cloth.

old soul: One who has reincarnated many times, experienced much and is therefore farther along the path. Old souls may be recognized by their qualities of compassion, self-effacement and wisdom. See: *soul.*

Oṁ: ओम् "Yes, verily." The most sacred mantra of Hinduism. An alternate transliteration of *Aum* (the sounds A and U blend to become O). See: *Aum.*

Oṁkāra: ओंकार "Impulse of the cosmic sound." A name of God as the source, or creator, of Primal Sound, Aum. See: *Aum.*

omnipotent: All-powerful. Able to do anything.

omnipresent: Present everywhere and in all things.

omniscient: Possessing infinite knowledge, all-knowing.

ordain (ordination): To confer the duties and responsibilities, authority and spiritual power of a religious office, such as priest, minister or *satguru,* through religious ceremony or mystical initiation. See: *dīkshā.*

ori ce of Brahman: See: *door of Brahman.*

pāda: पाद "The foot (of men and animals); quarter-part, section; stage; path." Names the four major sections of the Āgamic texts and the corresponding stages of practice and unfoldment on the path to *moksha.* ***—charyā pāda*** ("Good conduct stage"): Stage one, learning to live righteously and serve selflessly, performing karma yoga. Traditional acts of *charyā* include cleaning the temple, lighting lamps and collecting flowers for worship. Worship at this stage is mostly external. ***–kriyā pāda*** ("Religious action; worship stage"): Stage of bhakti yoga, of cultivating devotion through performing pūjā and regular daily *sādhana.* A central practice of the kriyā *pāda* is performing daily pūjā. ***—yoga pāda:*** ("Stage of uniting"): Having matured in the *charyā* and kriyā *pādas,* the soul now turns to internalized worship and rāja yoga under the guidance of a *satguru.* It is a time of *sādhana* and serious striving when realization of the Self is the goal. ***—jñāna pāda*** ("Stage of wisdom"): Once the soul has attained Realization, it is henceforth a wise one, who lives out the life of the body, shedding blessings on mankind. This stage is also called the San Mārga, "true path." See: *jñāna, yoga.*

pāda pūjā: पादपूजा "Foot worship." Ceremonial worship of the guru's sandals or holy feet, often through ablution with precious substances and offering of fruit and flowers. After the ceremony, the water of the bath, the fruit and other precious substances are partaken of as *prasāda* by the devotees. See: *guru, guru bhakti, pādukā, prasāda, ucchishṭa.*

padma: पद्म The lotus flower, *Nelumbo nucifera*, symbol of spiritual development and the chakras. Because it grows out of mud and rises to perfect purity and glory, it is an apt representation of spiritual unfoldment.

padmāsana: पद्मासन "Lotus posture." The most famous haṭha yoga āsana, the optimum pose for sustained meditation. The legs are crossed, the soles of the feet upward, resembling a lotus flower. In this pose the intellectual-emotional energies are balanced and quieted. See: *rāja yoga, yoga.*

pādukā: पादुका "Sandals." *Śrī Pādukā* refers to the sandals of the preceptor, the traditional icon of the guru, representing his venerable feet and worshiped as the source of grace. *Pādukā* also names one of Vīra Śaivism's eight aids *(ashṭāvaraṇa)* to faith—the practice of drinking the water from the ceremonial washing of the Śivaliṅga or the guru's feet. See: *guru bhakti, prasāda, satguru, ucchishṭa.*

panasa phala: पनसफल Jackfruit.

pañchabhūta: पञ्चभूत "Five elements." Earth, water, fire, air and ether. Also called *mahābhūta.* See: *indriya, tattva.*

Pañcha Gaṇapati: पञ्चगणपति A name and *mūrti* of Lord Gaṇeśa with five *(pañcha)* heads (more fully *Pañchamukha* "Five-faced"). Gaṇeśa in this form is worshiped especially during the Pañcha Gaṇapati festival, December 20-25, a time of gift-giving, celebration and renewal of harmony in personal relationships.

***pañcha* kriyā(s):** पञ्चक्रिया "Five duties." See: *pañcha nitya karma(s).*

Pañchākshara Mantra: पञ्चाक्षरमन्त्र "Five-syllabled incantation." Śaivism's most sacred mantra, *Namaḥ Śivaya,* "Homage to Siva." See: *Namaḥ Śivāya.*

pañchāṅga: पञ्चाङ्ग "Five limbs." The traditional Hindu sacred calendar, so named for its five basic elements: *tithi* (lunar day), *nakshatra* (asterism), *kāraṇa* (half lunar day), yoga (sun-moon angle) and *vāra* (week day). *Pañchāṅgas* are used by priests, astrologers and lay persons to determine the optimum times for various types of activities.

pañcha nitya karma(s): पञ्चनित्यकर्म "Five constant

duties." A traditional regimen of religious practice for Hindus: 1) dharma (virtuous living), 2)-*upāsanā* (worship), 3) *utsava* (holy days), 4) *tīrthayātrā* (pilgrimage) and 5) *saṁskāras* (sacraments.) See: *dharma, festival, pilgrimage, saṁskāra.*

pandit *(paṇḍita):* पण्डित "Learned one." Hindu religious scholar or theologian, well versed in philosophy, liturgy, religious law and sacred science.

panentheism: "All-in-God doctrine." The view that the universe is part of the being of God, as distinguished from *pantheism* ("all-is-God doctrine"), which identifies God with the total reality. In contrast, panentheism holds that God pervades the world, but is also beyond it. He is immanent and transcendent, relative and Absolute. This embracing of opposites is called dipolar. For the panentheist, God is in all, and all is in God. Panentheism is the technical term for monistic theism. See: *dvaita-advaita, monistic theism*.

pantheon: All the Gods of a religion together.

pāpa: पाप "Wickedness; sin, crime." 1) Bad or evil. 2) Wrongful action. 3) Demerit earned through wrongdoing. Pāpa includes all forms of wrongdoing, from the simplest infraction to the most heinous crime. Each act of *pāpa* carries its karmic consequence, *karmaphala,* "fruit of action," for which scriptures delineate specific penance for expiation. See: *evil, karma, penance, puṇya, sin.*

Paramātman: परमात्मन् "Supreme Self," or "transcendent soul." Paraśiva, Absolute Reality, the one transcendent Self of every soul. Contrasted with ātman, which includes all three aspects of the soul: *Paraśiva, Parāśakti* and *ānandamaya kośa.* See: *Paraśiva, Self, soul.*

Parameśvara: परमेश्वर "Supreme Lord or Ruler." God Śiva's third perfection, Supreme Mahādeva, Śiva-Śakti, mother of the universe. In this perfection as Personal, father-mother God, Śiva is a person—who has a body, with head, arms and legs, etc.—who acts, wills, blesses, gives *darśana*, guides, creates, preserves, reabsorbs, obscures and enlightens. See: *Naṭarāja.*

paramount: Most important, highest.

paramparā: परंपरा "Uninterrupted succession." Lineage. See: *guru paramparā.*

Parārtha Pūjā: परार्थपूजा "Public liturgy and worship." See: *pūjā.*

Parāśakti: पराशक्ति "Supreme power; primal energy." God Śiva's second perfection, which is impersonal, immanent, and with form—the all-pervasive, Pure Consciousness and Primal Substance of all that exists. There are many other descriptive names for Parāśakti—Satchidānanda ("existence-consciousness-bliss"), light, silence, divine mind, superconsciousness and more. The attainment of Parāśakti is called *savikalpa samādhi.* See: *Śiva.*

Paraśiva: परशिव "Transcendent Śiva." The Self God, Śiva's His first perfection, Absolute Reality. God Śiva as *That* which is beyond the grasp of consciousness, transcends time, form and space and defies description. Attainment of this is called Self Realization or *nirvikalpa samādhi*. See: *samādhi, Śiva.*

paraśu: परशु "Axe."

paraśvadha: परस्वध "Battleaxe."

Paravāk: परवाक् "The Primal Word." See: *vāk.*

Pārvatī: पार्वती "Mountain's daughter." One of many names for the Universal Mother. Prayers are offered to Her for strength, health and eradication of impurities. Mythologically, Pārvatī is wedded to Śiva. See: *Goddess, Śakti.*

pāśa: पाश "Tether; noose." The whole of existence, manifest and unmanifest. That which binds or limits the soul and keeps it (for a time) from manifesting its full potential. *Pāśa* refers to the soul's three-fold bondage of *āṇava,* karma and māyā. See: *liberation, mala, Pati-paśu-pāśa.*

Pāshāṇadāraṇa: पाषाणदारण "Pick axe."

paśyānti vāk: पश्यान्ति वाक् "The word that perceives." See: *vāk.*

pātāla: पाताल "Fallen or sinful region." The seventh chakra below the *mūlādhāra,* centered in the soles of the feet. Corresponds to the seventh and lowest astral netherworld beneath the Earth's surface, called Kākola ("black poison") or Pātāla. This is the realm in which misguided souls indulge in destruction for the sake of destruction, of torture, and of murder for the sake of murder. *Pātāla* also names the netherworld in general, and is a synonym for *Naraka*. See: *chakra, loka, Naraka*.

Patañjali: पतञ्जलि "Possessed of reverence." Śaivite Nātha *siddha* (ca 200 bce) who codified the ancient yoga philosophy which outlines the path to enlightenment through purification, control and transcendence of the mind. One of the six classical philosophical systems *(darśanas)* of Hinduism, known as Yoga Darśana. His great work, the *Yoga Sūtras,* comprises 200 aphorisms delineating *ashṭāṅga* (eight-limbed), rāja (kingly) or *siddha* (perfection) yoga. Still today it is the foremost text on meditative yoga. See: *rāja yoga, yoga*.

pāṭhaśāla: पाठशाल "Place of lessons." A school for training temple priests.

Pati: पति "Master; lord; owner." A name for God Śiva indicating His commanding relationship with souls as caring ruler and helpful guide. In Śaiva Siddhānta the term is part of the analogy of cowherd *(pati),* cows *(paśu,* souls) and the tether *(pāśa—āṇava,* karma and māyā) by which cows are tied. See: *Pati-paśu-pāśa, Śiva.*

Pati-paśu-pāśa: पति पशु पाश Literally: "master, cow and tether." These are the three primary elements *(padārtha,* or *tattvatrayī)* of Śaiva Siddhānta philosophy: God, soul and world—Divinity, man and cosmos—seen as a mystically and intricately

interrelated unity. Pati is God, envisioned as a cowherd. *Paśu* is the soul, envisioned as a cow. *Pāśa* is the all-important force or fetter by which God brings souls along the path to Truth. See: *pāśa, Śaiva Siddhānta, soul.*

pātra: पात्र Worthy; literally, a "receptacle" as of a drinking vessel. The condition of being a fit receptacle for.

patronymic: A name derived from the name of a father or ancestor, especially through a suffix or prefix indicating descent.

pāyasa: पायस– "Prepared with milk." Tapioca or rice pudding.-

penance: *Prāyaśchitta.* Atonement, expiation. An act of devotion (bhakti), austerity *(tapas)* or discipline *(sukṛitya)* undertaken to soften or nullify the anticipated reaction to a past action. Penance is uncomfortable karma inflicted upon oneself to mitigate one's karmic burden caused by wrongful actions *(kukarma).* It includes such acts as prostrating 108 times, fasting, self-denial, or carrying *kavadi* (public penance), as well as more extreme austerities, or *tapas.* See: *evil, kavadi, pāpa, sin.*

Periyapurāṇam: பெரிய புராணம் Twelfth book of the *Tirumurai.* Story of the 63 Śaiva Nayanar saints of Tamil Nadu, written by Sekkilar (ca 1140).

perpetuate: Cause to continue or be remembered; to keep from being lost.

phala: फल "fruit."

pilgrimage: *Tīrthayātrā.* "Journeying to a holy place." Pilgrimage. One of the five sacred duties *(pañcha nitya karmas)* of the Hindu is to journey periodically to one of the innumerable holy spots in India or other countries. Preceded by fasting and continence, it is a time of austerity and purification, when all worldly concerns are set aside and God becomes one's singular focus. See: *pañcha nitya karma.*

piṅgalā: पिंगला "Tawny channel." The masculine psychic current flowing along the spine. See: *kuṇḍalinī, nāḍī, rāja yoga.*

pitṛi tarpaṇa: पितृ तर्पण "Libations to ancestors." A sacred rite of offering water to deceased ancestors. One of the five daily sacrifices prescribed in the *Dharma Śāstras.* See: *pañcha mahāyajñas.*

plague: To distress, afflict, trouble or torment.

polytheism: Belief in or worship of many Gods. See also: *monotheism.*

pontiff: High priest; a spiritual leader endowed with great honor and authority.

prabhāvalī: प्रभावली "Luminous circle." The ornate arch, made of stone or metal, that stands just behind and above Deity images in temples and shrines. It connotes the cycle of creation, preservation and destruction. At the top of the arch is the fierce face of Mahākāla, the God of time, who transcends form and ultimately claims everything.

pradakshiṇā: प्रदक्षिणा "Moving rightward." Worshipful circumambulation, walking clockwise around the temple sanctum or other holy place, with the intention of shifting the mind from worldly concerns to awareness of the Divine. *Clockwise* has esoteric significance in that the chakras of *mūlādhāra* and above spin clockwise, while those below spin counterclockwise, taking one down into the lower regions of selfishness, greed, conflict and turmoil.

prakṛiti: प्रकृति "Primary matter; nature." In the 25-*tattva* Sāṅkhya system—which concerns itself only with the tangible spectrum of creation—*prakṛiti,* or *pradhāna,* is one of two supreme beginningless realities: matter and spirit, *prakṛiti* and *purusha,* the female and male principles. *Prakṛiti* is the manifesting aspect, as contrasted with the quiescent unmanifest *(purusha)* which is pure consciousness. In Śaivite cosmology, *prakṛiti* is the 24th of 36 *tattvas,* the potentiality of the physical cosmos, the gross energy from which all lower *tattvas* are formed. Its three qualities are *sattva, rajas* and *tamas.* See: *purusha, tattva.*

prāṇa: प्राण Vital energy or life principle. Literally, "vital air," from the root *praṇ,* "to breathe." *Prāṇa* in the human body moves in the *prāṇamaya kośa* as five primary life currents known as *vāyus,* "vital airs or winds." These are *prāṇa* (outgoing breath), *apāṇa* (incoming breath), *vyāṇa* (retained breath), *udāṇa* (ascending breath) and *samāṇa* (equalizing breath). Each governs crucial bodily functions, and all bodily energies are modifications of these. While *prāṇa* usually refers to the life principle, it sometimes denotes energy, the interrelated odic and actinic forces, the power or the animating force of the cosmos, the sum total of all energy and forces. See: *kośa, tattva.*

praṇāma: प्रणाम "Obeisance; bowing down." Reverent salutation in which the head or body is bowed. —***ashṭāṅga praṇāma*** ("Eight-limbed obeisance"): the full prostration for men, in which the hands, chest, forehead, knees and feet touch the ground. (Same as *śashṭāṅga praṇāma.*) —***pañchāṅga praṇāma*** ("Five-limbed obeisance"): the woman's form of prostration, in which the hands, head and legs touch the ground (with the ankles crossed, right over the left). A more exacting term for prostration is *praṇipāta,* "falling down in obeisance." See: *bhakti, namaskāra, prapatti.*

Praṇava: प्रणव "Humming." The mantra *Aum,* denoting God as the Primal Sound. It can be heard as the sound of one's own nerve system, like the sound of an electrical transformer or a swarm of bees. The meditator is taught to inwardly transform this sound into the inner light which lights the thoughts, and bask in this blissful consciousness. Praṇava is also known as the sound of the *nādanāḍī* śakti. See: *Aum,.*

prāṇāyāma: प्राणायाम "Breath control." See: *rāja yoga.*

prapatti: प्रपत्ति "Throwing oneself down." *Bhakti*—total, unconditional submission to God, often coupled with the attitude of personal helplessness, self-effacement and resignation. A term especially used in Vaishṇavism to name a concept extremely central to virtually all Hindu schools. See: *bhakti, grace, pāda, surrender.*

***prārabdha* karma:** प्रारब्धकर्म "Action that has been unleashed or aroused." See: *karma.*

prasāda: प्रसाद "Clarity, brightness; grace." 1) The virtue of serenity and graciousness. 2) Food offered to the Deity or the guru, or the blessed remnants of such food. 3) Any propitiatory offering. See: *sacrament.*

praśnottara: प्रश्नोत्तर "Question-answer *(praśna-uttara)*." A term for *catechism,* an interrogatory summation of religious doctrine.

precept: A commandment meant as a rule of action or conduct.

preceptor: Highly respected teacher and head of a spiritual order and clan; the equivalent of the word *satguru.*

preside: To be chairman at a gathering, in a position of authority within a group. To have charge of; to dominate.

Primal Soul: The uncreated, original, perfect soul—Śiva Parameśvara—who emanates from Himself the inner and outer universes and an infinite plurality of individual souls whose essence is identical with His essence. God in His personal aspect as Lord and Creator, depicted in many forms: Naṭarāja by Śaivites, Vishṇu by Vaishṇavites, Devī by Śāktas. See: *Naṭarāja, Parameśvara.*

Primal Sound: In Hinduism, sound is the first manifestation, even before light, in the creative scheme of things. The Primal Sound is also known as *Praṇava,* the sound of the *mūla* mantra, "Aum." See: *Praṇava.*

pṛithivī tattva: पृथिवी तत्त्व "Earth element." See: *tanmātra, tattva.*

prostration: See: *praṇāma.*

protocol: Customs of proper etiquette and ceremony, especially in relation to religious or political dignitaries. See: *culture.*

psychic: "Of the psyche or soul." Sensitive to spiritual processes and energies. Inwardly or intuitively aware of nonphysical realities; able to use powers such as clairvoyance, clairaudience and precognition. Nonphysical, subtle; pertaining to the deeper aspects of man. See: *clairaudience, clairvoyance.*

pūjā: पूजा "Worship, adoration." An Āgamic rite of worship performed in the home, temple or shrine, to the *mūrti* (Deity image), *śrī pādukā* (holy sandals), or other consecrated object, or to a person, such as the *satguru.* Its inner purpose is to purify the atmosphere around the object worshiped, establish a connection with the inner worlds and invoke the presence of God, Gods or one's guru. During pūjā, the officiant *(pujārī)* recites various chants praising the Divine and beseeching divine blessings, while making offerings in accordance with established traditions. Pūjā, the worship of a *mūrti* through water, lights and flowers in temples and shrines, is the Āgamic counterpart of the Vedic *yajña* rite, in which offerings are conveyed through the sacred *homa* fire. These are the two great streams of adoration and communion in Hinduism. —**Ātmārtha Pūjā:** *Kāraṇa Āgama*, v. 2, states: *Ātmārtha cha parārtha cha pūjā dvividhamuchyate,* "Worship is two-fold: for the benefit of oneself and for the benefit of others." Ātmārtha Pūjā is done for oneself and immediate family, usually at home in a private shrine. —**Parārtha Pūjā:** "Pūjā for others." Parārtha Pūjā is public pūjā performed by authorized or ordained priests in a public shrine or temple.

pujārī: पुजारी "Worshiper." A general term for Hindu temple priests, as well as anyone performing pūjā. *Pujārī* (sometimes *pūjārī)* is the Hindi form of the Sanskrit *pūjaka; pūsārī* in Tamil. *Archaka* is another term for the officiant priest used in the southern tradition. *Purohita* is a Smārta brāhmin priest who specializes in domestic rites. See: *pūjā.*

punarjanma: पुनर्जन्म "Reincarnation." From *punaḥ*, "again and again," and *janma*, "taking birth." See: *reincarnation.*

pundit: See: *pandit.*

puṇya: पुण्य "Holy; virtuous; auspicious." 1) Good or righteous. 2) Meritorious action. 3) Merit earned through right thought, word and action. *Puṇya* includes all forms of doing good, from the simplest helpful deed to a lifetime of conscientious beneficence. Each act of *puṇya* carries its karmic consequence, *karmaphala,* "fruit of action"—the positive reward of actions, words and deeds that are in keeping with dharma. See: *karma, pāpa, penance.*

Purāṇa: पुराण "Ancient (lore)." Hindu folk narratives containing ethical and cosmological teachings relative to Gods, man and the world. They revolve around five subjects: primary creation, secondary creation, genealogy, cycles of time and history. There are 18 major *Purāṇas* which are designated as either Śaivite, Vaishṇavite or Śākta.

Pure Consciousness: See: *Parāśakti.*

purusha: पुरुष "The spirit that dwells in the body/in the universe." Person; spirit; man. Metaphysically, the soul, neither male nor female. Also used in Yoga and Sāṅkhya for the transcendent Self. A synonym for ātman. *Purusha* can also refer to the Supreme Being or Soul, as it sometimes does in the *Upanishads.* See: *ātman, jīva, prakṛiti, soul, tattva.*

purushārtha: पुरुषार्थ "Human wealth or purpose." The four pursuits in which humans may legitimately engage, a basic principle of Hindu ethics. —***dharma*** ("Righteous living"): The fulfillment

of virtue, good works, duties and responsibilities, restraints and observances—performing one's part in the service and upliftment of society. This includes pursuit of truth under a guru of a particular *paramparā* and *sampradāya*. See: *dharma*. —***artha*** ("Wealth"): Material welfare and abundance, money, property, possessions. *Artha* is the pursuit of wealth, guided by dharma. It includes the basic needs—food, money, clothing and shelter—and extends to the wealth required to maintain a comfortable home, raise a family, fulfill a successful career and perform religious duties. See: *yajña*. —***kāma*** ("Pleasure, love; enjoyment"): Earthly love, aesthetic and cultural fulfillment, pleasures of the world (including sexual), the joys of family, intellectual satisfaction. Enjoyment of happiness, security, creativity, usefulness and inspiration. —***moksha*** ("Liberation"): Freedom from rebirth through the ultimate attainment, realization of the Self God, Paraśiva. The spiritual attainments and superconscious joys, attending renunciation and yoga leading to Self Realization. *Moksha* comes through the fulfillment of dharma, *artha* and kāma in the current or past lives, so that one is no longer attached to worldly joys or sorrows. See: *liberation, moksha*.

pushpaśara: पुष्पशर "Flower arrow." A weapon wielded by loving Gaṇeśa.

quantum: Quantity or amount. In science's quantum theory, a fixed basic unit, usually of energy. —**quantum particles of light:** Light understood not as a continuum, but as traveling bundles each of a same intensity. Deeper still, these particles originate and resolve themselves in a one divine energy. —**at the quantum level (of the mind):** Deep within the mind, at a subtle energy level.

quatrain: A stanza or poem of four lines.

quell: To quiet, subdue or put an end to.

Radhakrishnan, Dr. S.: रधकृष्णन् (1888-1975) A President of India (1962 to 1967), an outstanding scholar, philosopher, prolific writer, compelling speaker and effective spokesman of Hinduism. Along with Vivekānanda, Tagore, Aurobindo and others, he helped bring about the current Hindu revival. See also: *Vedānta*.

rāga: राग "That which enraptures." In the structure of melody in Indian music, a specific collection of sounds or notes. *Rāga* is similar to "scale" in Western notation, but *rāga* includes the unique emotional or mystical mood created when the melody is heard.

rajas: रजस् "Passion; activity." See: *guṇa*.

rāja yoga: राजयोग "King of yogas." Also known as *ashṭāṅga* yoga, "eight-limbed yoga." The classical yoga system of eight progressive stages to Illumination as described in various yoga *Upanishads*, the *Tirumantiram* and, most notably, the *Yoga Sūtras* of Patañjali. The eight stages are: *yama* (restraints), *niyama* (observances), āsana (posture), *prāṇāyāma* (breath control), *pratyāhara* (withdrawal), *dhāraṇa* (concentration), *dhyāna* (meditation) and *samādhi* (enstasy, mystic oneness). See: *enstasy, samādhi, yoga*.

Rāma: राम "Pleasing." Venerated hero of the *Rāmāyaṇa* epic, and one of the two most popular incarnations of Vishṇu, along with Kṛishṇa. His worship is almost universal among Vaishṇavas, and extensive among Smārtas and other liberal Hindus. He was a great worshiper of Śiva; and a Śiva temple called Rāmeśvaram was built in his name at the southern tip of India.

Rāmakṛishṇa: रामकृष्ण (1836–1886) One of the great saints and mystics of modern Hinduism, a champion and exemplar of monistic theism. A fervent devotee of Mother Kālī and staunch monist who taught oneness and the pursuit of *nirvikalpa samādhi*, realization of the Absolute. He was guru to the great Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), who internationalized Hindu thought and philosophy.

Rāmānuja: रामानुज Philosopher (1017–1137), saint, great bhakta, founder of one of five major Vaishṇava schools, and considered the greatest critic of *advaita*. In his famous *Śrī Bhāshya* on the *Brahma Sūtras*, he countered Sankara's absolute monism point-by-point with his qualified monism, called *Viśishṭādvaita Vedānta*. See: *Vedānta*.

Rāmāyaṇa: रामायण "Vehicle of Rāma." One of India's two grand epics *(Itihāsa)* along with the *Mahābhārata*. It is Valmiki's tragic love story of Rāma and Sītā, whose exemplary lives have helped set high standards of dignity and nobility as an integral part of Hindu dharma. Astronomical data in the story puts Rāma's reign at about 2015 bce. See also: *Itihāsa, Mahābhārata, Rāma*.

raṅgoli: रङ्गोलि Traditional household and priestly art of "drawing" intricate decorative patterns at the entrance to a home or temple or at the site of a religious ceremony. Known as *kolam* in Tamil. *Raṅgoli* designs are made with rice powder mixed to a watery paste, and sometimes with flowers and various-colored powdered pulses.

rasātala: रसातल "Subterranean region." The fifth chakra below the *mūlādhāra,* centered in the ankles. Corresponds to the fifth astral netherworld beneath the Earth's surface, called Ṛijīsha ("expelled") or Rasātala. Region of selfishness, self-centeredness and possessiveness. *Rasā* means "earth, soil; moisture." See: *chakra, loka, Naraka*.

ratnakumbha: रत्नकुम्भ "Pot of gems."

reaction: A response to an action.

reconciliation: To harmonize quarrels or mend differences. A tithing reconciliation is a written accounting of income and tithing.

reincarnate: To take birth in another body, having lived and died before.

reincarnation: "Re-entering the flesh." *Punarjanma;* metempsychosis. The process wherein souls take on a physical body through the birth process. The cycle of reincarnation ends when karma has been resolved and the Self God (Paraśiva) has been realized. This condition of release is called *moksha*. Then the soul continues to evolve and mature, but without the need to return to physical existence. See: *karma, moksha, saṁsāra, soul.*

religion: From Latin *religare*, "to bind back." Any system of belief in and worship of suprahuman beings or powers and/or a Supreme Being or Power. Religion is a structured vehicle for soul advancement which often includes theology, scripture, spiritual and moral practices, priesthood and liturgy. See: *Hinduism.*

remorse: Deep guilt or regret over a wrong one has committed.

renunciate: One who has given up worldly life; a monk. See: *sannyāsin.*

restraints: See: *yama-niyama.*

Ṛig Veda: ऋग्वेद *"Veda* of verse *(ṛik)."* The first and oldest of the four *Veda* compendia of revealed scriptures *(śruti),* including a hymn collection *(Saṁhitā),* priestly explanatory manuals *(Brāhmaṇas),* forest treatises *(Āraṇyakas)* elaborating on the Vedic rites, and philosophical dialogs *(Upanishads).* The oldest and core portion is the *Saṁhitā,* believed to date back, in its oral form, as far as 8,000 years. It embodies prayerful hymns of praise and invocation to the Divinities of nature and to the One Divine. The *Ṛig Veda Saṁhitā,* which in length equals Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* combined, is the most important Vedic hymn collection, for it lends a large number of its hymns to the other three *Veda Saṁhitās* (the *Sāma, Yajur* and *Atharva).* Chronologically, after the *Saṁhitās* came the *Brāhmaṇas,* followed by the *Āraṇyakas,* and finally the *Upanishads,* also called the *Vedānta,* meaning "*Veda's* end." See: *śruti, Veda.*

Ṛiṇamochana Gaṇapati: ऋणमोचनगणपति "The remover of bondage" is unique in that He holds a rose apple, goad, noose and His broken tusk.

ṛishi: ऋषि "Seer." A term for an enlightened being, emphasizing psychic perception and visionary wisdom.

rite (or ritual): A religious ceremony. See: *sacrament, sacrifice, saṁskāra.*

rites of passage: Sacraments marking crucial stages of life. See: *saṁskāra.*

rotundity: Roundness, plumpness

Rudra: रुद्र "Controller of awesome powers;" or "red, shining one." The name of Śiva as the God of dissolution, the universal force of reabsorption. *Rudra-Śiva* is revered both as the "terrifying one" and the "lord of tears," for He wields and controls the terrific powers which may cause lamentation among humans. See: *Naṭarāja.*

rudrāksha: रुद्राक्ष "Eye of Rudra;" or "red-eyed." From *rud,* "to cry," and *aksha,* meaning "eye." Marble-sized, multi-faced, reddish-brown seeds from the *Eleocarpus ganitrus*, or blue marble tree, which are sacred to Śiva and a symbol of His compassion for humanity. Garlands, *rudrāksha mālā,* of larger seeds are worn around the neck by monks; and nonmonastics, both men and women, often wear a single bead on a cord at the throat. Smaller beads (usually numbering 108) are strung together for japa (recitation). Indian legend records that God shed a tear when looking down upon the sorrowful plight of humanity. That tear fell to Earth and from it grew the first *rudrāksha* tree. Thus its seeds are worn by Hindus as a symbol of Śiva's love and compassion. See: *japa, mantra.*

rudrāksha mālā: रुद्राक्षमाला "Garland of Śiva's tears." A strand of prayer beads, usually 108, to count the repetitions of a mantra. Gaṇeśa's holding a japa *mālā* reminds us all to perform our daily japa yoga. See: *rudrāksha.*

śabda kośa: शब्दकोश "Sheath of sounds, or words." Vocabulary; a dictionary or glossary of terms.

sacrament: 1) Holy rite, especially one solemnized in a formal, consecrated manner which is a bonding between the recipient and God, Gods or guru. This includes rites of passage *(saṁskāra),* ceremonies sanctifying crucial events or stages of life. 2) *Prasāda.* Sacred substances, blessed in ceremony or by a holy person. See: *saṁskāra.*

sacred thread: *Yajñopavīta.* See: *upanayana.*

sacri ce: *Yajña.* 1) Making offerings to a Deity as an expression of homage and devotion. 2) Giving up something, often one's own possession, advantage or preference, to serve a higher purpose. The literal meaning of *sacrifice* is "to make sacred," implying an act of worship. It is the most common translation of the term *yajña,* from the verb *yuj,* "to worship." In Hinduism, all of life is a sacrifice—called *jīvayajña,* a giving of oneself—through which comes true spiritual fulfillment. *Tyāga,* the power of detachment, is an essential quality of true sacrifice. See: *surrender.*

Sadāśiva: सदाशिव "Ever-auspicious." A name of the Primal Soul, Śiva, a synonym for Parameśvara, which is expressed in the physical being of the

satguru. Sadāśiva especially denotes the power of revealing grace, *anugraha* śakti, the third *tattva,* after which emerge Śiva's other four divine powers. This five-fold manifestation or expression of God's activity in the cosmos is depicted in Hindu mantras, literature and art as the five-faced Sadāśivamūrti. See: *Parameśvara, tattva.*

sādhaka: साधक From *sadh,* "going straight to the goal." A spiritual aspirant; a devotee who performs *sādhana*. A serious seeker who has undertaken spiritual disciplines, is usually celibate and under the guidance of a guru. He wears white and may be under simple vows, but is not a yogi or sannyāsin. See: *sādhana.*

sādhana: साधन "Effective means of attainment." Self-effort, spiritual discipline; the way. Religious or spiritual disciplines, such as pūjā, yoga, meditation, japa, fasting and austerity. The effect of *sādhana* is the building of willpower, faith and confidence in oneself and in God, Gods and guru. See: *pāda, rāja yoga, spiritual unfoldment.*

sādhu: साधु "Virtuous one; straight, unerring." A holy man dedicated to the search for God. A sādhu may or may not be a yogī or a sannyāsin, or be connected in any way with a guru or legitimate lineage. Sādhus usually have no fixed abode and travel unattached from place to place, often living on alms.

sādhvī: साध्वी Feminine counterpart of sādhu. See: *sādhu.*

Saguṇa Brahman: सगुणब्रह्मन् Brahman "with qualities." Describes Śiva's perfections of Satchidānanda and Maheśvara, the Primal Soul and His Divine Mind—that part of God which is divine, all-knowing, all-loving, all-powerful and omnipotent. See: *Brahman.*

***sahasrāra* chakra:** सहस्रारचक्र "Thousand-spoked wheel." The cranial psychic force center. See: *chakra.*

Śaiva: शैव "Auspicious." Of or relating to Śaivism or its adherents, of whom there are about 400 million in the world today. Same as *Śaivite.* See: *Śaivism.*

Śaiva Ātmārtha Pūjā: शैव आत्मार्थ पूजा See: *pūjā.*

Śaiva Siddhānta: शैवसिद्धान्त "Final conclusions of Śaivism." The most widespread and influential Śaivite school today, predominant especially among the Tamil people in Sri Lanka and South India. It is the formalized theology of the divine revelations contained in the twenty-eight *Śaiva Āgamas*. For Śaiva Siddhāntins, Śiva is the totality of all, understood in three perfections: Parameśvara (the Personal Creator Lord), Parāśakti (the substratum of form) and Paraśiva (Absolute Reality which transcends all). Souls and world are identical in essence with Śiva, yet also differ in that they are evolving. A pluralistic stream arose in the middle ages from the teachings of Aghoraśiva and Meykandar, which denies that souls ever attain perfect sameness or unity with Śiva. See: *Śaivism.*

Śaiva Siddhānta Yoga Order: Ecclesiastical body of life-time renunciate swāmīs, a *saṅgam* was founded by Sivaya Subramuniyaswami in 1949.

Śaivism *(Śaiva):* शैव The religion followed by those who worship Śiva as supreme God. Oldest of the four denominations of Hinduism. The earliest historical evidence of Śaivism is from the Indus Valley civilization (purported to be 6,000 to 8,000 years old) in the form of the renowned seal of Śiva as Lord Paśupati, seated in a yogic pose. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Lord Rāma worshiped Śiva, as did his rival Rāvaṇa. In 624 bce Buddha was born a Śaivite Hindu prince in a royal family, and records of his time speak of the Śaiva ascetics who wandered the hills looking much as they do today.

Śaivite *(Śaiva):* शैव Of or relating to Śaivism or its adherents, of whom there are about 400 million in the world today. See: *Śaivism.*

Śaivite saints: See: *Nayanar.*

śākāhāra: शाकाहार "Vegetarian diet." From *śāka,* "vegetable," and *āhāra,* "eating; taking food." See: *meat-eater, vegetarian, yama-niyama.*

Śākta: शाक्त "Powerful," Of or relating to *Śāktism.* A follower of the Śākta Hindu religion. See: *Śāktism.*

śakti: शक्ति "Power, energy" (from the root *śak,* "to be able"). The active power or manifest energy of Śiva that pervades all of existence. Its most refined aspect is Parāśakti, or Satchidānanda, the pure consciousness and primal substratum of all form. In Śaiva Siddhānta, Śiva is All, and His divine energy, Śakti, is inseparable from Him. Śakti is most easily experienced by devotees as the sublime, bliss-inducing energy that emanates from a holy person or sanctified Hindu temple. See: *kuṇḍalinī, Parāśakti, Śāktism.*

Śakti Gaṇapati: शक्तिगणपति "The powerful" is four-armed and seated with *Śakti* on His knee. He holds a garland and gestures *abhaya* mudrā.

Śaktis: शक्ति "Consorts." Loving Gaṇeśa is often seen with two female consorts, or śaktis. They represent *iḍā* and *piṅgalā,* the two life currents, emotion and intellect, that hold us close to Earth.

Śāktism *(Śākta):* शाक्त "Doctrine of power." The religion followed by those who worship the Supreme as the Divine Mother—Śakti or Devī—in Her many forms, both gentle and fierce. Śāktism is one of the four primary denominations of Hinduism. See: *Śakti, tantrism.*

śālipallava: शालिपल्लव "Rice sprig."

samādhi: समाधि "Enstasy," which means "standing within one's Self." "Sameness; contemplation; union, wholeness; completion, accomplishment." *Samādhi* is the state of true yoga, in which the meditator and the object of meditation are one. *Samādhi* is of two levels. The first is *savikalpa samādhi* ("enstasy with form or seed"), identification or oneness with the essence of an object. Its highest form is

the realization of the primal substratum or pure consciousness, Satchidānanda. The second is *nirvikalpa samādhi* ("enstasy without form or seed"), identification with the Self, in which all modes of consciousness are transcended and Absolute Reality, Paraśiva, beyond time, form and space, is experienced. This brings in its aftermath a complete transformation of consciousness. See: *kuṇḍalinī, Paraśiva, rāja yoga, Self Realization.*

sampradāya: संप्रदाय "Tradition," "transmission;" a philosophical or religious doctrine-or lineage. A living stream of tradition or theology within Hinduism, passed on by oral training and initiation. "to give out," "render," "grant," bestow or confer; to hand down by tradition; to bequeath. See: *guru paramparā.*

saṁsāra: संसार "Flow." The phenomenal world. Transmigratory existence, fraught with impermanence and change. The cycle of birth, death and rebirth; the total pattern of successive earthly lives experienced by a soul.

saṁskāra: संस्कार "Impression, activator; sanctification, preparation." 1) The imprints left on the subconscious mind by experience (from this or previous lives), which then color all of life, one's nature, responses, states of mind, etc. 2) A sacrament or rite done to mark a significant transition of life. These make deep and positive impressions on the mind of the recipient, inform the family and community of changes in the lives of its members and secure inner-world blessings. See: *mind (five states), sacrament.*

Sanātana Dharma: सनातनधर्म "Eternal religion" or "everlasting path." It is the original designation for the Hindu religion. See: *Hinduism.*

Sanātani: सनातनि "Of the eternal." A Hindu, a follower of the eternal path.

sancti ed waters: See: *pāda pūjā, prasāda, ucçhishṭa.*

sandalwood: *Chandana.* The Asian evergreen tree *Santalum album.* Its sweetly fragrant heartwood is ground into the fine, tan-colored paste distributed as *prasāda* in Śaivite temples and used for sacred marks on the forehead, *tilaka.* Sandalwood is also prized for incense, carving and fine cabinetry.

saṅgama: सङ्गम "Association; fellowship." Also *saṅga.* Coming together in a group, especially for religious purposes. See: *Satsaṅga.*

saṅkalpa: संकल्प "Will; purpose; determination." A solemn vow or declaration of purpose to perform any ritual observance. Most commonly, *saṅkalpa* names the mental and verbal preparation made by a temple priest as he begins rites of worship. During the *saṅkalpa,* he informs all three worlds what he is about to do. He recites the name of the Deity, and the present time and place according to precise astrological notations and announces the type of ritual he is about to perform. Once the *saṅkalpa* is made, he is bound to complete the ceremony. See: *pūjā.*

Śaṅkara: शङ्कर "Conferring happiness; propitious." A name of Śiva, or Ādi Śaṅkara. One of Hinduism's most extraordinary monks (788–820) and preeminent guru of the Smārta Sampradāya. Noted for his monistic philosophy of Advaita Vedānta, his many scriptural commentaries, and the establishment of ten orders of sannyāsins with pontifical headquarters at strategic points across India. He lived only 32 years, but traveled throughout India and transformed the Hindu world of that time. See: *Vedānta.*

Saṅkaṭahara Gaṇapati: संकटहरगणपति "Dispeller of sorrow," seated on a red lotus flower, holds a bowl of pudding and displays *varada* mudrā.

śaṅkha: शङ्ख "Conch." The water-born conch symbolizes the origin of existence, which evolves in spiraling spheres. In ancient days its sound signaled battle's victory; today it heralds the high point of pūjā in Hindu temples. In the Deity's hands it stands for protection from evil, sounding the sacred.

San Mārga: सन्मार्ग "True path." A term especially important in *Śaiva Siddhānta.* 1) In general, the straight spiritual path leading to the ultimate goal, Self Realization, which does not detour into unnecessary psychic exploration or pointless development of siddhis. *San Mārgī* names a person who is "on the path," as opposed to *saṁsārī,* one engrossed in worldliness. 2) *San Mārga* is also an alternate term for the jñāna *pāda.* See: *liberation, pāda.*

San Mārga Sanctuary: A sanctuary at Kauai Aadheenam on the Garden Island of Kauai, Hawaii, centered around a 1/2 -mile straight path to the Supreme God, Śiva (Parameśvara-Parāśakti-Paraśiva) and the Iraivan Temple, which enshrines a massive 700-pound, single-pointed quartz crystal.

sānnidhya: सान्निध्य "(Divine) presence; nearness, proximity." The radiance and blessed presence of śakti within and around a temple or a holy person.

sannyāsa: संन्यास "Renunciation." "Throwing down or abandoning." *Sannyāsa* is the repudiation of the dharma, including the obligations and duties, of the householder and the acceptance of the even more demanding dharma of the renunciate. See: *sannyāsin.*

sannyāsin: संन्यासिन् "Renouncer." One who has taken sannyāsa *dīkshā,* a formal rite, or less often an informal blessing, entering the devotee into renunciate monasticism, binding him for life to certain vows which include chastity, poverty and obedience, and directing him on the path to Self Realization. A Hindu monk, swāmī, and one of a world brotherhood (or holy order) of sannyāsins. See: *swāmī.*

Sanskrit *(Saṅskṛita):* संस्कृत "Well-made;" "refined," "perfected." The classical sacerdotal language of ancient India, considered a pure vehicle for communication with the celestial worlds. It is the primary language in which Hindu scriptures are written,

including the *Vedas* and *Āgamas.* Employed today as a liturgical, literary and scholarly language, but no longer used as a spoken vernacular.

sant: सन्त् "Saint." A Hindi or vernacular term derived from the Sanskrit *sat,* meaning "truth; reality."

śānti: शान्ति "Peace."

śara: शर "Arrow." Loving Gaṇeśa has power over thought, and each one hits its mark. Bow drawn, arrow aimed, He teaches us to precisely begin all beginnings with good intentions.

śaraṇa: शरण "Refuge." *Saranam* in Tamil.

Sarasvatī: सरस्वती "The flowing one." Śakti, the Universal Mother; Goddess of the arts and learning, mythological consort of the God Brahmā. Sarasvatī, the river Goddess, is usually depicted wearing a white sārī and holding a *vīna,* sitting upon a swan or lotus flower. Prayers are offered to her for refinements of art, culture and learning. *Sarasvatī* also names one of seven sacred rivers (Sapta Sindhu) mentioned in the *Ṛig Veda.* See: *Goddess, Śakti.*

sārī: (Hindi, सारी) The traditional outer garment of a Hindu woman, consisting of a long, unstitched piece of cloth, usually colorful cotton or silk, wrapped around the body, forming an ankle-length skirt, and around the bosom and over the shoulder.

śaśikalā: शशिकला "Period of the moon." Specifically, the crescent moon that adorns Lord Śiva's hair, the moon of the dark fortnight's second day.

śāstra: शास्त्र "Sacred text; teaching." 1) Any religious or philosophical treatise, or body of writings. 2) A department of knowledge, a science; e.g., the *Dharma Śāstras* on religious law, *Artha Śāstras* on politics.

Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa: शतपथब्राह्मण "Priest manual of 100 paths." A supplement of *Śukla Yajur Veda* on theology, philosophy and modes of worship.

satguru (sadguru): सद्गुरु "True weighty one." A spiritual preceptor of the highest attainment—one who has realized the ultimate Truth, Paraśiva, through *nirvikalpa samādhi*—a *jīvanmukta* able to lead others securely along the spiritual path. He is always a sannyāsin, an unmarried renunciate. All Hindu denominations teach that the grace and guidance of a living *sat*guru is a necessity for Self Realization. He is recognized and revered as the embodiment of God, Sadāśiva, the source of grace and of liberation. See: *guru, guru bhakti, guru-śishya system.*

satsaṅga: सत्संग "Holy gathering." Association of devotees for temple or home worship, celebration, selfless service and religious studies.

sattva guṇa: सत्त्वगुण "Purity." The quality of goodness or purity. See: *guṇa.*

Satya Mantra: सत्य मन्त्र "Sacred syllable of truth." Aum. See: *Aum.*

Second World: The astral or subtle plane. Here the soul continues its activities in the astral body during sleep and after the physical body dies. It is the in-between world which includes the Devaloka and the Narakaloka. The Second world exists "within" the First World or physical plane. See: *loka.*

secular: Not sacred or religious; temporal or worldly.

secular humanism: A system that rejects religious faith and worship and holds that one need not look beyond man for life's ethical meaning.

seer: Visionary; ṛishi. A wise being or mystic who sees beyond the limits of ordinary perception. See: *ākāśa, ṛishi.*

Self (Self God): God Śiva's perfection of Absolute Reality, Paraśiva—That which abides at the core of every soul. See: *Paramātman, Paraśiva.*

self-declared *sannyāsin:* Paramadeśī sannyāsin. See: *sannyāsin.*

self-effacement: Modest, retiring behavior; giving all credit to God, preceptor and other persons and not accepting praise for one's accomplishments.

self-erasement: The process of wiping out or eradicating the personal ego and the dross of the past, lodged in the memory patterns of the subconscious.

Self Realization: Direct knowing of the Self God, Paraśiva. Self Realization is known in Sanskrit as *nirvikalpa samādhi;* "enstasy without form or seed;" the ultimate spiritual attainment (also called *asamprajñata samādhi).* Esoterically, this state is attained when the mystic kuṇḍalinī force pierces through the *sahasrāra* chakra at the crown of the head. See: *God Realization, liberation, kuṇḍalinī, Paraśiva, rāja yoga, samādhi.*

sentamarai: செந்தாமரை "Red lotus flower."

severance: A breaking off or separation.

Shamanism: From the Sanskrit *śramaṇa,* "ascetic," akin to *śram,* meaning "to exert." Generally refers to any religion based on the belief that good or evil spirits can be influenced by priests, or shamans, who serve as intermediaries between man and divine forces. Descriptive of many of the world's tribal, indigenous faiths. See also: *Śāktism, trance.*

Shaṇmukha: शण्मुख "Six-faced." A name for Lord Murugan or Kārttikeya, denoting the multiplicity of His divine functions. See: *Kārttikeya.*

shaṭkoṇa: षट्कोण "Six-pointed star," formed by two interlocking triangles, the upper one representing Śiva's transcendent Being, and the lower one Śiva's manifest energy, Śakti. The *shaṭkoṇa* is part of Lord Kārttikeya's *yantra*. A similar emblem, the Star of David, appears in Judaism. See: *Kārttikeya.*

shrouded: Covered, protected, screened, veiled, sheltered.

siddhānta: सिद्धान्त "Final attainments" or "conclusions." Siddhānta refers to ultimate understanding arrived at in any field of knowledge.

siddha: सिद्ध A "perfected one" or accomplished yogī, a person of great spiritual attainment or powers. See also: *siddhi, siddha yoga.*

siddha yoga: सिद्धयोग "Yoga of perfected attainment

or of supernatural powers." 1) A term used in the *Tirumantiram* and other Śaiva scriptures to describe the yoga which is the way of life of adepts after attaining of Paraśiva. Siddha yoga involves the development of magical or mystical powers, or siddhis, such as the eight classical powers. It is a highly advanced yoga which seeks profound transformation of body, mind and emotions and the ability to live in a flawless state of God Consciousness. 2) The highly accomplished practices of certain alchemists. See: *siddha yogī, siddhi.*

siddhi: सिद्धि "Power, accomplishment; perfection." Extraordinary powers of the soul, developed through consistent meditation and deliberate, grueling, often uncomfortable *tapas,* or awakened naturally through spiritual maturity and yogic *sādhana*. Through the repeated experience of Self Realization, *siddhis* naturally unfold according to the needs of the individual. Before Self Realization, the use or development of siddhis is among the greatest obstacles on the path because it cultivates *ahaṁkāra,* I-ness, and militates against the attainment of *prapatti,* complete submission to the will of God, Gods and guru. See: *ashṭavibhūti.*

Siddhi* and *Buddhi: सिद्धि बुद्धि "Attainment and Wisdom;" names of the two symbolic consorts of Lord Gaṇeśa.

Siddhidātā: सिद्धिदाता "Giver of success, fulfillment," an epithet of Lord Gaṇeśa.

Siddhi Gaṇapati: सिद्धिगणपति A name and traditional *mūrti*, or form, of Gaṇeśa, "the accomplished one," who holds a bouquet of flowers, an axe, mango, sugarcane and, in His trunk, a sesame sweet.

Sikhism: "Discipleship." Religion of nine million members founded in India about 500 years ago by the saint Guru Nānak. A reformist faith which rejects idolatry and the caste system, its holy book is the *Ādi Granth,* and its main holy center is the Golden Temple of Amritsar.

sin: Intentional transgression of divine law. Akin to the Latin *sons,* "guilty." Hinduism does not view sin as a crime against God, but as an act against dharma—moral order—and one's own self. It is thought natural, if unfortunate, that young souls act wrongly, for they are living in nescience, *avidya,* the darkness of ignorance. Sin is an *adharmic* course of action which automatically brings negative consequences. In Hinduism, there are no such concepts as *inherent* or *mortal sin*. See: *aura, evil, karma, pāpa.*

sindūra: सिन्दूर "Red lead, vermillion." *(Sindūr* in Hindi.) A red powder used to make the forehead mark *(pottu,* or *tilaka)* on the Deity image. See: *tilaka.*

Siṁha Gaṇapati: सिंहगणपति "The lionine one" rides a lion and holds another in one hand. He also holds a *vīṇā,* a lotus and pot of jewels.

śishya: शिष्य "A pupil or disciple," especially one who has proven himself and has formally been accepted by a guru.

Śiva: शिव "The auspicious, gracious or kindly one." Supreme Being of the Śaivite religion. God Śiva is All and in all, simultaneously the creator and the creation, both immanent and transcendent. As personal Deity, He is creator, preserver and destroyer. He is a one being, perhaps best understood in three perfections: Parameśvara (Primal Soul), Parāśakti (pure consciousness) and Paraśiva (Absolute Reality). See: *Naṭarāja, Parameśvara, Parāśakti, Paraśiva, Śaivism.*

Śivāchārya: शिवाचार्य "Moving toward Śiva," the hereditary priests of the Śaiva Siddhānta tradition. The title of Ādiśaiva Brāhmins. An Ādiśaiva priest who has received the necessary training and *dīkshās* to perform public Śiva temple rites known as Āgamic Nitya Parārtha Pūjā. A fully qualified Śivāchārya is also known as *archaka. Śivāchārya,* too, names the family clan of this priest tradition. See: *Brahmā.*

Śiva consciousness: Śivachaitanya. A broad term naming the experience or state of being conscious of Śiva in a multitude of ways, such as the five expressed in the following meditation. **Vital Breath *(prāṇa):*** Experience the inbreath and outbreath as Śiva's will within the body. Become attuned to the ever-present pulse of the universe, knowing that nothing moves but by His divine will. **All-Pervasive Energy (śakti):** Become conscious of the flow of life within the body. Realize that it is the same universal energy within every living thing. Practice seeing the life energy within another's eyes. **Manifest Sacred Form *(darśana):*** Hold in your mind a sacred form, such as Naṭarāja, Śivaliṅga or the *satguru*—who is Sadāśiva—and think of nothing else. See every form as a form of our God Śiva. **Inner Light *(jyoti):*** Observe the light that illumines the thoughts. Concentrate only on that light, as you might practice being more aware of the light on a TV screen than of its changing pictures. **Sacred Sound *(nāda):*** Listen to the constant high-pitched *ee* sounding in the head. It is like the tone of an electrical transformer, a hundred *tamburas* distantly playing or a humming swarm of bees. See: *jñāna, mind (five states).*

Śivaliṅga: शिवलिङ्ग "Mark (or sign) of Śiva." The most prevalent icon of Śiva, found in virtually all Śiva temples. A rounded, elliptical, aniconic image, usually set on a circular base, or *pīṭha.* The Śivaliṅga is the simplest and most ancient symbol of Śiva, especially of Paraśiva, God beyond all forms and qualities. The *pīṭha* represents Parāśakti, the manifesting power of God. Liṅgas are usually of stone (either carved or naturally existing, *svayambhū,* such as shaped by a swift-flowing river), but may also be of metal, precious gems, crystal, wood, earth or transitory materials such as ice. See: *mūrti, Śaivism.*

Śivaloka: शिवलोक "Realm of Śiva." See: *loka.*

Śiva-Śakti: शिवशक्ति Father-Mother God, both immanent and transcendent. A name for God Śiva encompassing His unmanifest Being and manifest energy. See: *Parameśvara, Śiva.*

Śivāya: शिवाय "To Siva." Śiva's name in dative case.

Skanda: स्कन्द "Quicksilver; leaping one." One of Lord Kārttikeya's oldest names, and His form as scarlet-hued warrior God. See: *Kārttikeya.*

śloka: श्लोक "Verse," from the verbal root, *ślok,* "to compose." A verse, phrase, proverb or hymn of praise, usually composed in a specified meter. Especially a verse of two lines, each of sixteen syllables. *Śloka* is the primary verse form of the Sanskrit epics, *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa.* See also: *sūtra.*

Smārta: स्मार्त "Of or related to *smṛiti,*" the secondary Hindu scriptures. Of or related to Smārtism; a follower of Smārtism. See: *Smārtism.*

Smārtism (smārta): Sect based on the secondary scriptures *(smṛiti).* The most liberal of the four major denominations of Hinduism, an ancient Vedic *brāhminical* tradition (ca 700 bce) which from the 9th century onward was guided and deeply influenced by the Advaita Vedānta teachings of the reformist Ādi Śaṅkara. Its adherents rely mainly on the classical *smṛiti* literature, especially the *Itihāsas (Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata,* the latter of which includes the *Bhagavad Gītā), Purāṇas* and *Dharma Śāstras*. These are regarded as complementary to and a means to understanding the *Vedas.* See: *Daśanāmi, Śaṅkara.*

smṛiti: स्मृति That which is "remembered;" the tradition. Hinduism's nonrevealed, secondary but deeply revered scriptures, derived from man's insight and experience. *Smṛiti* speaks of secular matters—science, law, history, agriculture, etc.—as well as spiritual lore, ranging from day-to-day rules and regulations to superconscious outpourings. 1) The term *smṛiti* refers to a specific collection of ancient Sanskritic texts. 2) In a general sense, *smṛiti* may refer to any text other than *śruti* (revealed scripture) that is revered as scripture within a particular sect.

snāna: स्नान "Bathing." Ceremonial ablution, especially in sacred waters, traditionally precsribed as an obligatory Hindu duty.

soul: The real being of man, as distinguished from body, mind and emotions. The soul (known as ātman or *purusha*) is the sum of its two aspects: 1) the form or body of the soul and 2) the essence of the soul—Pure Consciousness *(Parāśakti* or *Satchidānanda)* and Absolute Reality *(Paraśiva).* See: *ātman, Paramātman, spiritual unfoldment.*

specious: Apparent, seeming to be good, sound, true, correct, without really being so.

spiritual unfoldment: The unfoldment of the spirit, the inherent, divine soul of man. The gradual expansion of consciousness as kuṇḍalinī śakti slowly rises through the *sushumṇā.* The term *spiritual unfoldment* indicates this slow, imperceptible process, likened to a lotus flower's emerging from bud to effulgent beauty. See: *kuṇḍalinī, liberation, pāda, sādhana.*

spurious: Illegitimate, not true or genuine.

śraddhā: श्रद्धा "Faith; belief." See: *pañcha śraddhā.*

śrāddha: श्राद्ध "Memorial." Relating to commemorative ceremonies for the deceased, held one week, one month after death, and annually thereafter, according to tradition. See: *death, saṁskāra.*

Śrī Chakra: श्रीचक्र "Venerated wheel." See: *yantra.*

Śrī Rudram: श्रीरुद्रम् Hymn to the "Wielder of awesome powers." Preeminent Vedic hymn to Lord Śiva as the God of dissolution, chanted daily in Śiva temples throughout India. It is in this long prayer, located in the middle of the *Yajur Veda, Taittirīya Saṁhitā*, the first of the three *Vedas*, that the Śaivite mantra Namaḥ Śivāya first appears.

sṛishṭi: सृष्टि "Creation."

Sṛishṭi Gaṇapati: सृष्टिगणपति "The creator God" rides a mouse and holds a noose, a goad, His tusk (representing selfless sacrifice) and a mango.

śruti: श्रुति "That which is heard." Aurally, or clairaudiently, received scripture. Hinduism's revealed scriptures, of supreme theological authority and spiritual value. They are timeless teachings transmitted to ṛishis, or seers directly by God Śiva and the Gods thousands of years ago. *Śruti* is thus said to be *apaurusheya,* "impersonal," or rather "suprahuman." *Śruti* essentially consists of the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas*, preserved initially through oral tradition and eventually written down in Sanskrit. Among the many sacred books of the Hindus, these two bodies of knowledge are held in the highest esteem. For countless centuries *śruti* has been the basis of philosophical discussion, study and commentary, and this attention has given rise to countless schools of thought. It is also the subject of deep study and meditation, to realize the wisdom of the ancients within oneself. Most mantras are drawn from *śruti,* used for rites of worship, both public and domestic, as well as for personal prayer and japa. See: *Āgama, smṛiti, Veda.*

sthapati: स्थपति From *stha,* "building" or "place," and *pati,* "lord or father." A master of Āgamic temple architecture, sculpture, city planning and other traditional building arts. A *sthapati* must be well versed in the *Śilpa Śāstras*, experienced in all aspects of temple construction, pious, mystically trained and a good administrator, able to direct and guide a team of *śilpīs,* stonecutters, carvers, sculptors, woodworkers, etc.

sthūla: स्थूल "Gross; physical." See: *vāk.*

strī dharma: स्त्रीधर्म "Woman's duty." Traditional conduct, observances, vocational and spiritual patterns which bring spiritual fulfillment and societal stability. Characterized by modesty, quiet strength,

religiousness, dignity and nurturing of family. Notably, she is most needed and irreplaceable as the maker of the home and the educator of their children as noble citizens of tomorrow.

subatomic: Of the inner parts of atoms; anything smaller than an atom.

subconscious mind: *Saṁskāra chitta.* See: *aura, conscience, mind (five states).*

sub-subconscious: *Vāsanā chitta.* Area of the subconscious where past experiences mix and merge, forming new images, reactions and beliefs. See: *mind (five states).*

substratum: A substance or element which lies beneath and supports another.

subsuperconscious mind: *Anukāraṇa chitta.* See: *mind (five states).*

śuddhi: शुद्धि "Purification." Also, *śraddha śuddhi,* "purification of faith." The rite of accepting back into the Hindu fold individuals who have been converted to other faiths or otherwise require purification to rejoin the Hindu congregation. An alternate term to *vrātyastoma,* "oath affirmation."

śūdra: शूद्र "Worker, servant." The social class of skilled artisans, workers and laborers. See: *varṇa dharma.*

suffuse: Pour beneath, diffuse beneath, spread, as light through clouds or divine energy flowing out from pūjā or from a holy personage.

śuka: शुक "Parrot."

sukarma: सुकर्म "Good actions." See: *karma, puṇya.*

sukhāsana: सुखासन "Pleasant, easy pose." Often applies to any comfortable seating pose. More specifically, a synonym for the *swāstikāsana,* in which the legs are crossed, the feet tucked under the knees.

sūkshma: सूक्ष्म "Subtle." See: *vāk.*

śuṇḍā: शुण्डा "Elephant trunk."

Sundarar: சுந்தரர் "Beautiful." One of the four Tamil Samayāchāryas (ca 800), and composer of devotional hymns to God Śiva, which form the seventh book of the *Tirumurai.* In these, he pleads forthrightly to Śiva for material as well as spiritual abundance. See: *Nayanar.*

superconscious mind: *Kāraṇa chitta.* See: *mind (five states; three phases).*

supplicate (supplication): To ask for humbly. To earnestly pray for.

supreme: Highest in rank, power, authority.

Supreme God: Highest God, the source or creator of all other Gods, beings and all manifestation.

surrender: Giving up or yielding. Surrender to the Divine is called *prapatti,* a complete giving over of oneself to God's will in total trust and abandonment. See: *bhakti, prapatti, sacrifice.*

Sūrya: सूर्य "Sun." One of the principal Divinities of the *Vedas*, also prominent in the epics and *Purāṇas.* Śaivites revere Sūrya, the Sun God, each morning as Śiva Sūrya. Smārtas and Vaishṇavas revere the golden orb as Sūrya Nārāyaṇa. As the source of light, the sun is the most readily apparent image of Divinity available to man. As the giver of life, Sūrya is worshiped during harvest festivals everywhere. Esoterically, the sun represents the point where the manifest and unmanifest worlds meet or unite. In yoga, the sun represents the masculine force, *piṅgalā.* Sūrya also signifies the Self within.

sushumṇā nāḍī: सुषुम्णानाडी "Most gracious channel." Central psychic nerve current within the spinal column. See: *kuṇḍalinī, nāḍī, samādhi.*

sushupti: सुषुप्ति "Deep sleep." A state more refined than the ordinary dream state, the perceptions of which are often too subtle to be remembered upon awakening. This is the state of visionary dreams. One of the four *avasthās* described in the *Māṇḍūkya Upanishad.* See: *avasthā, consciousness.*

sutala: सुतल "Great abyss." Region of obsessive jealousy and retaliation. The third chakra below the *mūlādhāra,* centered in the knees. Corresponds to the third astral netherworld beneath the Earth's surface, called Saṁhāta ("abandoned") or Sutala. See: *chakra, hell, loka, Naraka.*

sūtra: सूत्र "Thread." An aphoristic verse; the literary style consisting of such maxims. From 500 bce, this style was widely adopted by Indian philosophical systems and eventually employed in works on law, grammar, medicine, poetry, crafts, etc.

svadharma: स्वधर्म "One's own way." See: *dharma.*

svādhishṭhāna: स्वाधिष्ठान "One's own base." See: *chakra.*

svādhyāya: स्वाध्याय "Self-reflection; scriptural study." See: *yama-niyama.*

svapna: स्वप्न "Dream." Astral consciousness. The sleeping-dreaming state of subtle perception and experience. One of the four states of consciousness, *avasthās,* described in the *Māṇḍūkya Upanishad.* See: *avasthā, consciousness.*

svayambhū mūrti: स्वयम्भूमूर्ति "Self-existent image." A Deity image discovered in nature, and not carved or crafted by human hands. See: *mūrti.*

swāmī: स्वामी "Lord; owner." He who knows or is master of himself. A respectful title for a Hindu monk, usually a sannyāsin. The term swāmī is sometimes applied more broadly to include nonmonastics dedicated to spiritual work. See: *monastic, sannyāsin.*

swastika: स्वस्तिक "Sign of auspiciousness," From *su* ("wellness," "auspiciousness") and *astu,* "be it so." The ancient Hindu symbol of auspiciousness and good fortune, representing the sun and often associated with Gaṇeśa. The right-angled arms of the swastika denote the indirect way in which Divinity is reached—through intuition and not by intellect—and how life is filled with change and indirection. It has been a prominent symbol in many cultures. (*Svastu* is a salutation meaning "blessings," "good

health," or "may it be well with you.") See: *mūrti.*

taijasa: तैजस "Full of light." A term for the dreaming state, equivalent to *svapna.* See: *avasthā, svapna.*

tala: तल "Plane or world; level; base, bottom; abyss." Root of the name of the seven realms of lower consciousness centered in the seven chakras below the *mūlādhāra.* See: *chakra, hell, loka, Naraka.*

tāla: ताल "Time measure." In Indian music, the organization of time into meter and rhythmic pulse with sometimes complex subdivisions. *Tāla* is similar to "time signature" in Western notation except that *tāla* includes the unique emotional or mystical mood.

***talātala* chakra:** तलातल चक्र "Lower region." The fourth chakra below the *mūlādhāra,* centered in the calves. Region of chronic mental confusion and unreasonable stubbornness. Corresponds to the fourth astral netherworld beneath the Earth's surface, called Tāmisra ("darkness") or Talātala. This state of consciousness is born of the sole motivation of self-preservation. See: *chakra, loka, Naraka.*

tambūrā: तंबूरा (Hindi) A long-necked, four-stringed fretless lute that provides a drone accompaniment for a singer or instrumentalist.

Tamil: தமிழ் A Dravidian language and Caucasian race of South India.

Tamil Nadu: தமிழ் நாடு State in South India, 50,000 square miles, population 55 million. Land of countless holy scriptures, saints, sages and over 40,000 magnificent temples, including Chidambaram, Madurai, Palani Hills and Rāmeśvaram.

tanmātrā: तन्मात्रा "Primal matter." The five fundamental subtle "substances" of the five gross elements, *mahābhūtas.* The five *tanmātras* and their corresponding elements are: 1) *śabda* (sound), *ākāśa* (ether); 2) *sparśa* (touch), *vāyu* (air); 3) *rūpa* (sight), *tejas* (fire); 4) *rasa* (taste), *apas* (water); 5) *gandha* (smell), *pṛithivī* (earth).

tantra: तन्त्र "Loom, methodology." 1) Most generally, a synonym for *śāstra,* "scripture." 2) A synonym for the Āgamic texts, especially those of the Śākta faith, a class of Hindu scripture providing detailed instruction on all aspects of religion, mystic knowledge and science. The tantras are also associated with the Śaiva tradition. 3) A specific method, technique or spiritual practice within the Śaiva and Śākta traditions. See: *tantrism.*

tantric *(tāntrika):* तान्त्रिक Adjectival form for practices prescribed in the tantra traditions. The name of a follower of any of the tantric traditions. See: *tantra, tantrism.*

tantrism: The enlightenment path outlined in the Tantra scriptures. 1) Tantrism is sometimes considered a parallel stream of history and tradition in Hinduism, running alongside and gradually interweaving with the Vedic *brāhminical* tradition. 2) Tantrism refers to traditions, mainly within Śaivism and Śāktism, that focus on the arousal of the kuṇḍalinī force and which view the human body as a vehicle of the Divine and an instrument for liberation. Tantrism's ultimate aim is a channeling of the kuṇḍalinī life force through the *sushumṇā,* the gracious channel, upwards into the *sahasrāra* chakra and beyond, through the door of Brahman *(brahmarandhra)* into Paraśiva, either before or at the time of death. The stress is on the transformation of all spheres of consciousness, spiritual, psychic, emotional and material. It is a path of *sādhana.* 3) —***Śākta Tantrism:*** Brings a strong emphasis on the worship of the feminine force. Depending on the school, this may be symbolic or literal in rites involving sexual intercourse, etc. Śākta Tantrism's main principle is the use of the material to gain the spiritual. In certain schools, historically, this implies embracing that which is normally forbidden and manipulating the forces to attain transcendent consciousness rather than lower consciousness. See: *kuṇḍalinī, rāja yoga, Śāktism, tantra.*

tapas: तपस् "Warmth, heat," hence psychic energy, spiritual fervor or ardor. Austerity, asceticism, penance. State of accelerated unfoldment and working with the forces through spiritual practices. A state of humble submission to the divine forces and surrender to the processes of inner purification which occurs almost automatically at certain stages. Denotes religious austerity, intense meditation, penance, bodily mortification; connotes spiritual purification and transformation as a "fiery process" that "burns up" impurities, ego, *vāsanas* and past karmas that obstruct God Realization. See: *kuṇḍalinī, penance, sādhana.*

Taruṇa Gaṇapati: तरुणगणपति A name and traditional *mūrti,* or form, of Gaṇeśa, "the youthful one," with eight arms, holding noose, goad, *modaka,* wood apple, rose apple, tusk, paddy and sugarcane.

tattva: तत्त्व "That-ness" or "essential nature." *Tattvas* are the primary principles, elements, states or categories of existence, the building blocks of the universe. Ṛishis describe this emanational process as the unfoldment of thirty-six *tattvas,* stages or evolutes of manifestation, descending from subtle to gross. At *mahāpralaya,* cosmic dissolution, they enfold into their respective sources, with only the first two *tattvas* surviving the great dissolution. See: *mahāpralaya.*

temple: An edifice in a consecrated place dedicated to the worship of God or the Gods. From the Latin *templum,* "temple, sanctuary; marked space." Hindu temples, over one million worldwide, are revered as sacred, magical places in which the three worlds most consciously commune—structures especially built and consecrated to channel the subtle

spiritual energies of inner-world beings. The temple's psychic atmosphere is maintained through regular worship ceremonies (pūjā) invoking the Deity, who from the Third World uses His installed image *(mūrti)* as a temporary body through which bless those living on the earth plane, the First World. See: *darśana, pilgrimage*.

tenet: A principle, doctrine, or belief held as a truth, as by some group.

theism: Belief that God exists as a real, conscious, personal Supreme Being, creator and ruler of the universe. May also include belief in the Gods.

third eye: The inner organ of psychic vision, located above and between the two physical eyes at the location of the *ājñā* chakra. See: *ājñā chakra, chakras.*

Third World: See: *loka.*

three worlds: The three worlds of existence, *triloka,* are the primary hierarchical divisions of the cosmos. 1) Bhūloka: "Earth world," the physical plane. 2) Antarloka: "Inner or in-between world," the subtle or astral plane. 3) Śivaloka: "World of Śiva," and of the Gods and highly evolved souls; the causal plane, also called Kāraṇaloka. See: *loka, world.*

tila gola: तिलगोल "Sesame ball." A type of Indian sweet.

tilaka: तिलक "Sesamum-like mark," from *tila,* "sesame seed." Distinctive marks made on the forehead or the brow with clay, ashes or sandalwood paste as an indication of sectarian affiliation. Vaishṇavas wear a vertical v-shaped *tilaka* made of clay. The Śaivite *tilaka,* called *tripuṇḍra,* consists of three horizontal lines of white holy ash with a dot, usually red, below the middle of the forehead. See: *bindu, Hinduism.*

tīrtha: तीर्थ "Passageway; ford." A bathing *ghat* or place of pilgrimage, especially on the banks of sacred waters. Also refers to water offered in pūjā.

tīrthayātrā: तीर्थयात्रा "Journeying to a holy place." Pilgrimage. One of the five sacred duties *(pañcha nitya karmas)* of the Hindu is to journey periodically to one of the innumerable holy spots in India or other countries. Preceded by fasting and continence, it is a time of austerity and purification, when all worldly concerns are set aside and God becomes one's singular focus. See: *pañcha nitya karmas, pañcha śraddhā.*

Tirukural: திருக்குறள் "Holy couplets." A treasury of Hindu ethical insight and a literary masterpiece of the Tamil language, written by Śaiva Saint Tiruvalluvar (ca 200 BCE) near present-day Madras. See: *Tiruvalluvar.*

Tirumantiram: திருமந்திரம் "Holy incantation." The Nandinātha Sampradāya's oldest Tamil scripture; written ca 200 BCE by Ṛishi Tirumular. It is the earliest part of the *Tirumurai,* and a vast storehouse of esoteric yogic and tantric knowledge. It contains the essence of rāja yoga and *siddha* yoga and the fundamental doctrines of the 28 *Śaiva Siddhānta Āgamas*, which in turn are the heritage of the ancient pre-historic traditions of Śaivism.

Tirumular: திருமூலர் An illustrious *siddha* yogī and ṛishi of the Nandinātha Sampradāya's Kailāsa Paramparā who came from the Himalayas (ca 200 bce) to Tamil Nadu to compose the *Tirumantiram.* In this scripture he recorded the tenets of Śaivism in concise and precise verse form, based upon his own realizations and the supreme authority of the *Śaiva Āgamas* and the *Vedas.* Tirumular was a disciple of Maharishi Nandinātha. See: *Kailāsa Paramparā, Tirumantiram, Vedānta.*

Tirumurai: திருமுறை "Holy book." A twelve-book collection of hymns and writings of South Indian Śaivite saints, compiled by Saint Nambiyandar Nambi (ca 1000).

Tiruvalluvar: திருவள்ளுவர் "Holy weaver." Tamil weaver and householder saint (ca 200 bce) who wrote the classic Śaivite ethical scripture Tirukural. See: *Tirukural.*

transcendent: Surpassing the limits of experience or manifest form. In Śaiva Siddhānta, a quality of God Śiva as Absolute Reality, Paraśiva, the Self. Distinguished from immanent. See: *Paraśiva.*

transliteration: Writing words, sentences, etc., in the corresponding characters of another alphabet.

translucent: Partially transparent; allowing some light to shine through.

tribhaṅga: त्रिभंग "Three bends." A standing pose in which the body's center line passes through the left (or right) eye, the middle of the chest, and between the heels. The hips are shifted to the right (or left), the upper torso to the left (or right), and the head leans to the right (or left).

tribal: Relating to, or having the character of a tribe, a group, clan or village related by ancestry, race or allegiance to a common leader or lineage. Often used in derogation in referring to so-called primitive peoples. Also neutral in reference to indigenous peoples worldwide.

Trimukha Gaṇapati: त्रिमुखगणपति The contemplative "three-faced" Lord sits on a lotus flower, telling His beads and gesturing protection and blessings.

tṛiṇa: तृण "Grass."

tripuṇḍra: त्रिपुण्ड्र "Three marks." The Śaivite sectarian mark, consisting of three horizontal lines of *vibhūti* (holy ash) on the brow, often with a dot *(bindu)* at the third eye. The three lines represent the soul's three bonds: *āṇava,* karma and māyā. Holy ash, made of burnt cow dung, is a reminder of the temporary nature of the physical body and the urgency to strive for spiritual attainment and closeness to God. See: *bindu, tilaka, vibhūti.*

triśūla: त्रिशुल "Trident."A three-pronged spear or trident wielded by Lord Śiva and certain Śaivite ascetics. Also held by loving Gaṇeśa, it symbolizes God's

three fundamental śaktis or powers—*icçhā* (desire, will, love), kriyā (action) and jñāna (wisdom).

Tṛitīyākshi: तृतीयाक्षि "The third eye." See: *third eye.*

Tryakshara Gaṇapati: त्र्यक्षरगणपति "The Lord of three letters" (A-U-M) has fly whisks in His ears. He is often seen holding a tasty *modaka* in His trunk.

turīya: तुरीय "The fourth." The superconscious state beyond waking, dreaming and deep sleep. One of the four states of consciousness, *avasthās,* described in the *Māṇḍūkya Upanishad.* See: *avasthā, consciousness.*

turīyātīta: तुरीयातीत "Beyond the fourth." The utterly transcendent, superconscious state. A state of *samādhi.* See: *avasthā, consciousness.*

ubiquitous: Present everywhere at the same time. Omnipresent.

ucçhishṭa: उच्छिष्ट "Leavings; remainder." Religiously, the precious leavings from the guru's food plate or the waters from the bathing of his feet or sandals (or of a Deity) which are ingested by devotees as *prasāda.* See: *prasāda, satguru.*

Ucçhishṭa Gaṇapati: उच्छिष्टगणपति A name and traditional *mūrti*, or form, of Gaṇeśa as "Lord of offerings (of that which has been offered and blessed)." A six-armed *mūrti,* He sits with His *śakti*, holding a vīṇā and a japa *mālā.*

udarabandha: उदरबन्ध "Waistband."

Uddaṇḍa Gaṇapati: उद्दण्डगणपति "The enforcer of dharma" is a ten-armed *mūrti* holding a pot of gems, sugarcane, lotus, a mace and more.

Umā: उमा "O do not." A name for Śakti said to derive from the exclamation addressed to Pārvatī by her mother in the *Śiva Purāṇa,* beseeching her to desist from practicing austerities. Others connect it with the word *ammā,* meaning "mother" in South Indian languages.

Umāsundarī: उमासुन्दरी "Goddess of Beauty," or "Beauteous Mother."

Umāganesh (Umāgaṇeśa): उमागणेश "Motherly Lord of Hosts." A name of Ganeśa.

unmanifest: Not evident or perceivable. Philosophically, akin to *transcendent.* God Śiva is unmanifest in His formless perfection, Paraśiva. See: *Paraśiva.*

upadeśa: उपदेश "Advice; religious instruction." Often given in question-and-answer form from guru to disciple. The *satguru's* spiritual discourses.

upanayana: उपनयन "Bringing near." A youth's formal initiation into Vedic study under a guru, traditionally as a resident of his *āśrama,* and the investiture of the sacred thread *(yajñopavīta or upavīta),* signifying entrance into one of the three upper castes. The *upanayana* is among twelve *saṁskāras* prescribed in the *Dharma Śāstras* and explained in the *Gṛihya Sūtras.* See: *saṁskāra.*

Upanishad: उपनिषद् "Sitting near devotedly." The fourth and final portion of the *Vedas*, expounding the secret, philosophical meaning of the Vedic hymns. The *Upanishads* are a collection of profound texts which are the source of Vedānta and have dominated Indian thought for thousands of years. They are philosophical chronicles of ṛishis expounding the nature of God, soul and cosmos, exquisite renderings of the deepest Hindu thought. See: *śruti, Veda, Vedānta.*

Ūrdhva Gaṇapati: ऊर्ध्वगणपति "The elevated one" sits with one of His śaktis on His left knee. His six hands hold a sprig of paddy, a lotus and more.

utkuṭakāsana: उत्कुटकासन "Sitting on the hams," usually with one or both knees raised. The name of a common *bhaṅgima,* or pose, of Lord Gaṇeśa.

utsava: उत्सव "Festival." Religious celebrations or holy days and their observance in the home and temple. *Utsava* is one of the five constant duties, *pañcha nitya karmas.* See: *festival, pañcha nitya karmas.*

uttarāyaṇa: उत्तरायण "Northern way." The half-year, *ayana,* beginning with winter solstice, when the sun begins its apparent northward journey.

vāhana: वाहन "Bearing, carrying" or "conveying." Each Hindu God is depicted as riding an animal/bird *vāhana*, which is symbolic of a function of the God. For example, Śiva rides the bull, Lord Murugan rides the peacock and Lord Gaṇeśa rides the mouse.

vaidyuta: वैद्युत "Proceeding from lightning." Electric energy.

vaikharī vāk: वैखरी वाक् "The faculty of speech." See: *vāk.*

Vaishṇava: वैष्णव "Way of Vishṇu." Of or relating to Vishṇu. A follower of Lord Vishṇu or His incarnations, such as Kṛishṇa or Rāma. See: *Vaishṇavism.*

Vaishṇavism *(Vaishṇava):* वैष्णव One of the four major religions or denominations of Hinduism, representing roughly half of the world's one billion Hindus. It gravitates around the worship of Lord Vishṇu as Personal God, His incarnations and their consorts. Vaishṇavism stresses the personal aspect of God over the impersonal, and *bhakti* (devotion) as the true path to salvation. Foremost among Vaishṇava scriptures are the *Vaishṇava Āgamas, Rāmāyaṇa, Bhagavad Gītā* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa.*

Vaishṇavite: A follower of Vishṇu or His incarnations. See: *Vaishṇavism.*

vaiśvānara: वैश्वानर "Referring to all human beings." A term referring to the waking state of beings in general, the cosmic soul in the conscious mind. *Vaiśvānara* is one of the four states of consciousness, *avasthās.* It is a name for *agni,* as the fire that controls body, mind and emotions in the waking state. Also an alternate term for *jāgrat,* wakefulness. See:

avasthā, jāgrat.

vaiśya: वैश्य "Landowner; merchant." The social class of bankers, businessmen, industrialists; employers. Merchant class, originally those whose business was trade as well as agriculture. See: *varṇa dharma.*

vajra: वज्र "Lightning bolt." Also *vajratriśūla.* A symbol of spiritual power. Usually two tridents, without staffs, joined together with the two sets of three prongs pointing away from one another at 180°. *Vajra* can also refer to the single trident.

vāk: वाक् "Speech." Theologically, it is through the supreme Vāk (or Paravāk), the "Primal Word" of the *Vedas*, and its various aspects, that creation issues forth. Vāk, the word, is said to descend in four cosmic steps or levels: *mahākāraṇa,* the great causal; *kāraṇa,* the causal, the mind principle; *sūkshma,* the vital life force; and *sthūla,* physical matter. These correspond to the four states, *avasthās,* of consciousness: *jāgrat,* wakefulness; *svapna,* dreaming; *sushupti,* deep sleep; and *turīya,* the fourth. Related to the human microcosm in the *tantrika* tradition, *vāk* is correlated to the chakras. Paravāk, the great causal, *mahākāraṇa,* is said to center in the base of the spinal column in the *mūlādhāra* chakra, the abode of Gaṇapati as Brahmaṇaspati, Master of the Word. *Pasyānti vāk,* "the word that perceives," is located in the navel center, *maṇipūra* chakra. *Madhyama vāk,* the intermediate word, is centered between the navel and the throat, from whence speech, *vaikharī vāk,* is expressed. Gaṇapati as Brahmaṇaspati is the Master of the Word, the Lord of Satya Mantra. And so, the *Tantra* conceives Him having His abode in the *mūlādhāra* of beings, from where speech originates in the form of Paravāk.

Vakratuṇḍa: वक्रतुण्ड "He of crooked trunk." An aspect of Lord Gaṇeśa cited in the *Mudgala Purāṇa* as the conqueror of *matsara,* jealousy.

valampuri: वलम्पुरि "Right-turning." A term for the rather rare images of Gaṇeśa in which the trunk is turning to the Deity's right. Cf: *edampuri.*

vāma: वाम 1) "Pleasant; beautiful; benignant; striving after"—as in Vāmadeva, a name of Śiva. 2) "Left; crooked; acting in the opposite way"—as in *vāma mārga,* the left-handed tantric path. See: *left-handed, tantrism.*

vanakkam: வணக்கம் The Tamil equivalent to *namaskāra.*

Varada Gaṇapati: वरदगणपति "The boon-giver" is the *mūrti* distinguished by the prominent third eye, dish of honey and crowning crescent moon.

***varada* mudrā:** वरदमुद्र "Boon-giving gesture." A hand pose shown by the Gods or a guru, in which the palm hangs loose at the wrist, facing the benefactor, with the fingers pointing downward, usually outstretched.

Varada Vināyaka: वरदविनायक "Lord of boons." The Gaṇeśa *mūrti* enshrined at the Mahad Hamlet Temple of Mahārāshṭra.

Vārāṇasī: वाराणसी Also known as Kāśī or Banāras. (Derived from the name of two rivers, the Varaṇā, "warding off," and Asī, "sword.") One of the most holy of Śaivite cities, and among the oldest cities in the world. Located in North India on the Ganges River. Hindus consider it highly sanctifying to die in Kāśī, revering it as a gateway to *moksha.*

***varṇa* dharma:** वर्णधर्म "The way of one's kind." The hereditary social class system, generally referred to as *caste,* established in India in ancient times. Within *varṇa* dharma are the many religious and moral codes which define human virtue. *Varṇa* dharma is social duty, in keeping with the principles of good conduct, according to one's community, which is generally based on the craft or occupation of the family. Strictly speaking it encompasses two interrelated social hierarchies: 1) *varṇa,* which refers to the four classes: brāhmin, kshatriya, vaiśya and śūdra; and 2) *jāti,* the myriad occupational subgroups, or guilds, which in India number over 3,000.

***varṇāśrama* dharma:** वर्णाश्रमधर्म "The way of one's caste and stage of life." Names the social structure of four classes *(varṇa),* hundreds of castes *(jāti)* and four stages of life *(āśramas).* It is the combined principles of *varṇa* dharma and *āśrama* dharma. See: *āśrama dharma, dharma.*

vāsanā: वासना "Abode." Subconscious inclinations. From *vās,* "dwelling, residue, remainder." The subliminal inclinations and habit patterns which, as driving forces, color and motivate one's attitudes and future actions. *Vāsanās* are the conglomerate results of subconscious impressions *(saṁskāras)* created through experience. *Saṁskāras,* experiential impressions, combine in the subconscious to form *vāsanās,* which thereafter contribute to mental fluctuations, called *vṛitti.* The most complex and emotionally charged *vāsanās* are found in the dimension of mind called the sub-subconscious, or *vāsanā chitta.* See: *saṁskāra, mind (five states).*

Vasishṭha: वसिष्ठ "Most excellent." Disciple of Maharishi Nandikeśvara (Nandinātha) (ca 250 bce) along with Patañjali and Vyāghrapāda (as recorded in Pāṇini's book of grammar). Also the name of several other famous sages, including the ṛishi attributed with composing the hymns of the *Ṛig Veda's* seventh *maṇḍala,* another who plays a central role in the epics and certain *Purāṇas* and *Upanishads,* and a third who expounds the ancient yogic wisdom to Lord Rāma in the 29,000-verse *Yoga Vāsishṭha.*

Veda: वेद "Wisdom." Sagely revelations which comprise Hinduism's most authoritative scripture. They, along with the *Āgamas,* are *śruti,* "that which is heard." The *Vedas* are a body of dozens of holy texts known collectively as the *Veda,* or as the four *Vedas: Ṛig, Yajur, Sāma* and *Atharva.* In all they include over 100,000 verses as well as additional prose. Each

Veda has four sections: *Saṁhitās* (hymn collections), *Brāhmaṇas* (priestly manuals), *Āraṇyakas* (forest treatises) and *Upanishads* (enlightened discourses). See: *Āraṇyaka, Brāhmaṇa, śruti, Upanishad.*

Vedānta: वेदान्त "Ultimate wisdom" or "final conclusions of the *Vedas.*" Vedānta is the system of thought embodied in the *Upanishads* (ca 1500-600 bce), which give forth the ultimate conclusions of the *Vedas*. Through history there developed numerous Vedānta schools, ranging from pure dualism to absolute monism. The Vedānta perspective elucidated in *Loving Gaṇesha* is Advaita Īśvaravāda, "monistic theism" or panentheism, exemplified in the Vedānta-Siddhānta of Ṛishi Tirumular (ca 250 bce) of the Nandinātha Sampradāya in his *Tirumantiram,* which is a perfect summation of both the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas*. See: *monistic theism, panentheism, Tirumantiram.*

Vedic-Āgamic: Simultaneously drawing from and complying with both of Hinduism's revealed scriptures *(śruti)*, *Vedas* and *Āgamas,* which represent two complementary, intertwining streams of history and tradition. The difference between Siddhānta and Vedānta is traditionally described in that while the *Vedas* represent man looking for God, the *Āgamas* hold the perspective of God looking to help man.

vegetarian: *Śākāhāra*. Of a diet which excludes meat, fish, fowl and eggs. Vegetarianism is a principle of health and environmental ethics that has been a keystone of Indian life for thousands of years. Vegetarian foods include grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes and dairy products. A person following a vegetarian diet is called a *śākāhārī.* A nonveggie is called *mānsāhārī.* See: *guṇa, non-veggie, veggie, yama-niyama.*

veggie: A vegetable. A vegetarian. See: *non-veggie, vegetarian.*

veiling grace: *Tirobhāva* śakti. The divine power that limits the soul's perception by binding or attaching the soul to the bonds of *āṇava,* karma, and māyā—enabling it to grow and evolve as an individual being. See: *grace.*

vel: வேல் "Spear, lance." The symbol of Lord Kārttikeya's divine authority as Lord of yoga and commander of the devas. (Known as *śūla* in Sanskrit.)

venerate: To respect deeply; to revere.

vermillion: Bright red.

vestments: The clothing, especially official robes or other garb, worn by religious persons, often as a sign of their spiritual position or ordination.

vibhūti: विभूति Powerful," "pervading," "appearing." From *bhū* "existence," or "manifestation" and *vi,* "apart." Holy ash, a whitish powder prepared by burning cow dung along with other precious substances—milk, ghee, honey, etc. It symbolizes purity and is one of the main sacraments offered to God and given to worshipers after pūjā in all Śaivite temples and shrines. Śaivites wear three stripes on the brow as a distinct sectarian mark, as do many Smārtas. *Vibhūti* is also a synonym for *siddhi,* supernormal powers developed through yoga practice. See: *tilaka, tripuṇḍra.*

vidyā: विद्या "Knowledge, learning, science." The power of understanding gained through study and meditation. Contrasted with *avidyā,* ignorance.

vidyārambha: विद्यारंभ "Commencement of learning." See: *saṁskāra.*

Vighnarāja Gaṇapati: विघ्नराजगणपति "The Lord of Obstacles" is bedecked in jewels. His special implements are the conch, discus and flower arrow. This is Gaṇeśa's aspect as the conqueror of *mamata,* egoity.

Vigheśvara: विघ्नेश्वर "Lord of Obstacles." A name for Lord Gaṇeśa describing His power to both remove and create obstacles to guide souls along the right path. See: *Gaṇeśa.*

Vijaya Gaṇapati: विजयगणपति "The victorious one" rides the mouse and holds four primary symbols: the broken tusk, goad, noose and mango.

Vikaṭa: विकट "Deformed; having an unusual size or aspect." A name of Gaṇeśa cited in the *Mudgala Purāṇa* as the conqueror of *kāma,* lust.

vīṇā: वीणा Large South Indian popular musical instrument usually having seven strings and two calabash gourd resonance boxes.

Vināyaka: विनायक "Remover." A name of Lord Gaṇeśa, meaning the remover of obstacles (sometimes preceded by *vighna,* "obstacle"). See: *Gaṇeśa.*

Vināyaka Ahaval: விநாயகர் அகவல் "Ode to Vināyaka." Famous Tamil poem in praise of Gaṇeśa by the woman saint, Auvaiyar (ca 200bce).

Vināyaka Vratam: விநாயக விரதம் A 21-day festival to Lord Gaṇeśa beginning on the full-moon day of November-December. An important festival in Tamil Nadu and in Tamil communities worldwide, when special pūjās are conducted in Gaṇeśa temples and devotees make a vow *(vrata),* such as to attend the daily pūjā or to fast by taking only one meal a day.

Vīra Gaṇapati: वीरगणपति "The valiant warrior" is a *mūrti* recognized by His sixteen hands, holding a variety of weapons: mace, bow, axes and more.

visarjana: विसर्जन "Departure." See: *Gaṇeśa Chaturthī.*

Vishṇu: विश्णु "The All-Pervasive." Supreme Deity of the Vaishṇavite religion. God as personal Lord and Creator, the All-Loving Divine Personality, who periodically incarnates and lives a fully human life to reestablish dharma whenever necessary. In Śaivism, Vishṇu is Śiva's aspect as Preserver. See: *Vaishṇavism.*

visualize (visualization): To imagine, create mental images. Exercising the power of thought to plan for and shape the future.

viśvagrāsa: विश्वग्रास "Total absorption." The final merger, or absorption, of the soul in Śiva, by His grace, at the fulfillment of its evolution. It is the ultimate union of the individual soul body with the body of Śiva—Parameśvara—within the Śivaloka, from whence the soul first emanated. This occurs at the end of the soul's evolution, after the four outer sheaths—*annamaya kośa, prāṇamaya kośa, manomaya kośa* and *vijñānamaya kośa*—have been discarded. Finally, *ānandamaya kośa,* the soul form itself, merges in the Primal Soul. Individuality is lost as the soul becomes Śiva, the Creator, Preserver, Destroyer, Veiler and Revealer. Individual identity expands into universality. Having previously merged in Paraśiva and Parāśakti in states of *samādhi,* the soul now fully merges into Parameśvara and is one with all three of Śiva's perfections. *Jīva* has totally become Śiva—not a new and independent Śiva, as might be construed, for there is and can only be one Supreme God Śiva. See: *ātman, evolution of the soul, samādhi, soul.*

vitala: वितल "Region of negation." Region of raging anger and viciousness. The second chakra below the *mūlādhāra,* centered in the thighs. Corresponds to the second astral netherworld beneath the Earth's surface, called Avīchi ("joyless") or Vitala. See: *chakra, loka, Naraka.*

vivāha: विवाह "Marriage." See: *saṁskāras.*

Vivekānanda, Swāmī: विवेकानन्द "Of blissful discrimination." Disciple of Śrī Rāmakṛishṇa who was overtaken by an ardent love of Hinduism and a missionary zeal that drove him onward. He attained *mahāsamādhi* at age 39 (1863–1902). Most notable among his achievements was a trip around the world on which he gave brilliant lectures, especially in Europe and America, that created much respect for Hinduism. In India he founded the Rāmakṛishṇa Mission which thrives today internationally with over 100 centers and nearly 1,000 sannyāsins. He is credited, along with Tagore, Aurobindo, Rādhākṛishṇan and others, with sparking the modern Hindu revival.

vow: See: *vrata.*

vrata: व्रत "Vow, religious oath." Often a vow to perform certain disciplines over a period of time, such as penance, fasting, specific mantra repetitions, worship or meditation. *Vratas* extend from the simplest personal promise to irrevocable vows made before God, Gods, guru and community.

vrātyastoma: व्रात्यस्तोम "Vow pronouncement." The traditional purification rite, outlined in the *Taṇḍya Brāhmaṇa,* to welcome back into a Hindu community those who have become impure. It is performed for Hindus returning to India from abroad and for those who have embraced other faiths.

vṛiksha: वृक्ष "Tree."

wealth: *Artha.* Abundance; financial stability. See: *purushārtha.*

wood apple: The *kapittha* fruit. See: *kapittha.*

world: In Hindu theology, *world* refers to 1) ***loka:*** a particular region of consciousness or plane of existence. 2) **māyā:** The whole of manifest existence; the phenomenal universe, or cosmos, including the mental, spiritual and physical realms of existence, depending on its use. Also denoted by the terms *prakṛiti* and Brahmāṇḍa. 3) ***pāśa:*** In Śaivism, the term *world* is often used to translate the term *pāśa* in the Āgamic triad of fundamentals—Pati, *paśu, pāśa,* "God, soul, world." It is thus defined as the "fetter" *(pāśa)* that binds the soul, veiling its true nature and enabling it to grow and evolve through experience as an individual being. In this sense, the world, or *pāśa,* is three-fold, comprising *āṇava* (the force of individuation), karma (the principle of cause and effect) and māyā (manifestation, the principle of matter, Śiva's mirific energy, the sixth *tattva).* See: *Brahmāṇḍa, loka, māya, microcosm-macrocosm, pāśa, tattva.*

worldly: Materialistic, unspiritual. Devoted to or concerned with the affairs or pleasures of the world, especially excessive concern to the exclusion of religious thought and life. Connoting ways born of the lower chakras: jealousy, greed, selfishness, anger, guile, etc. —**worldliness:** The state or quality of being worldly.

yajña: यज्ञ "Worship; sacrifice." One of the most central Hindu concepts—sacrifice and surrender through acts of worship, inner and outer. 1) A form of ritual worship especially prevalent in Vedic times, in which oblations—ghee, grains, spices and exotic woods—are offered into a fire according to scriptural injunctions while special mantras are chanted. The element fire, *Agni,* is revered as the divine messenger who carries offerings and prayers to the Gods.

yajñopavīta: यज्ञोपवीत "Sacred thread." See: *upanayana.*

Yajur Veda: यजुर्वेद "Wisdom of sacrificial formulas." One of the four compilations of revelatory texts called *Vedas (Ṛig, Sāma, Yajur* and *Atharva).* When used alone, the term *Yajur Veda* generally refers to this *Veda's* central and oldest portion—the *Saṁhitā,* "hymn collection." Of this there are two recensions: 1) the *Kṛishṇa* ("black") *Yajur Veda* (so called because the commentary, *Brāhmaṇa,* material is mixed with the hymns); and 2) the *Śukla* ("white or clear") *Yajur Veda* (with no commentary among the hymns). See: *Vedas.*

yama-niyama: यमनियम "Restraints-observances." The first two of the eight limbs of rāja yoga, constituting Hinduism's fundamental ethical codes, the ten *yamas* and ten *niyamas* are the essential foundation for all spiritual progress. The *yamas* are the ethical restraints; the *niyamas* are the religious practices. Here are the ten traditional *yamas* and ten *niyamas*. —***yamas:*** 1) **ahiṁsā:** "Noninjury." 2)-***satya:*** "Truthfulness." 3) ***asteya:*** "Nonstealing." 4) ***brahmacharya:*** "Sexual purity." 5) ***kshamā:*** "Patience." 6) ***dhṛiti:*** "Steadfastness." 7) ***dayā:*** "Compassion." 8) ***ārjava:*** "Honesty, straightforwardness." 9) ***mitāhāra:*** "Moderate appetite." 10) ***śaucha:*** "Purity." —***niyamas:*** 1) ***hrī:*** "Remorse." 2) ***santosha:*** "Contentment." 3) ***dāna:*** "Giving." 4) ***āstikya:*** "Faith." 5) **Īśvarapūjana:** "Worship of the Lord." 6) ***siddhānta śravaṇa:*** "Scriptural listening." 7) ***mati:*** "Cognition." 8) ***vrata:*** "Sacred vows." 9) **japa:** "Recitation." 10) ***tapas:*** "Austerity." See: *rāja yoga.*

yantra: यन्त्र "Restrainer," "limiter," a mystic diagram composed of geometric and alphabetic figures—usually etched on small plates of gold, silver or copper. Sometimes rendered in three dimensions in stone or metal. The purpose of a *yantra* is to focus spiritual and mental energies according to computer-like *yantric* pattern, be it for health, wealth, childbearing or the invoking of one God or another. It is usually installed near or under the temple Deity.

yoga: योग "Union." From *yuj,* "to yoke, harness, unite." The philosophy, process, disciplines and practices whose purpose is the yoking of individual consciousness with transcendent or divine consciousness. One of the six *darśanas*, or systems of orthodox Hindu philosophy. Yoga was codified by Patañjali in his *Yoga Sūtras (*ca 200 bce) as the eight limbs *(ashṭāṅga)* of rāja yoga. It is essentially a one system, but historically, parts of rāja yoga have been developed and emphasized as yogas in themselves. Prominent among the many forms of yoga are haṭha yoga (emphasizing bodily perfection in preparation for meditation), kriyā yoga (emphasizing breath control), as well as karma yoga (selfless service) and bhakti yoga (devotional practices) which could be regarded as an expression of rāja yoga's first two limbs *(yama* and *niyama).* See: *bhakti yoga, haṭha yoga, rāja yoga.*

yogadaṇḍa: यगदण्ड "Meditation staff." A curved arm rest used during meditation, usually made of wood and attached to a staff about two feet long.

Yoga Gaṇapati: योगगणपति "The meditator" is a special *mūrti* of Gaṇeśa, seated in yogic pose holding a yoga staff and a strand of prayer beads.

Yogaswami: யோகசுவாமி "Master of yoga." Sri Lanka's renowned spiritual master (1872–1964); a siddhar of the Nandinātha Sampradāya's Kailasa Paramparā who initiated Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami in 1949. See: *Kailāsa Paramparā.*

yogī: योगी One who practices yoga, especially kuṇḍalinī yoga or rāja yoga. (More properly *yogin.* Feminine, *yoginī.*)

yuga: युग "Eon," "age." One of four ages which chart the duration of the world: Satya (or Kṛita), Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali. In the first period, dharma reigns supreme; but as the ages revolve, virtue diminishes and ignorance and injustice increase. At the end of the Kali Yuga (our current period), the cycle begins again with Satya Yuga.

Sanskrit Pronunciation

Saṅskṛitam Uccāraṇam

संस्कृतम् उच्चारणम्

VOWELS

Long vowels (marked like *ā*) are sounded twice as long as short vowels. The four dipthongs, e, ai, o, au, are always sounded long, but never marked as such.

अ	a	like the u in "but" or the a in "about"
आ ा	ā	like the o in "bot" or the a in "father"
इ ि	i	like the i in "fill" and "bit"
ई ी	ī	like the ee in "feel" and "beet"
उ ु	u	like the u in "pull" and "full"
ऊ ू	ū	like the oo in "pool" (contrast with the short u in full)
ऋ	ṛi	(ṛ in mantras) like the ri in "rig"
ॠ	ṛī	(ṝ in mantras) like the ree in "reed"
ऌ	ḷ	like the lry in "jewelry"
ए े	e	like the a in "gate" or the e in "prey"
ऐ ै	ai	like the "I" in "I'm" or the ai in "aisle"
ओ ो	o	like the o in "wrote" and "stone"
औ ौ	au	like the ou in "loud" or like the o in "cow"

GUTTURAL CONSONANTS

Sounded in the throat.

क्	k	like the k in "skate" (initial "s" softens the letter which is normally aspirated in English)
ख्	kh	like the k in "kate" or kh in "inkhorn"
ग्	g	like the g in "gate" or "go"
घ्	gh	like the gh in "doghouse"
ङ	ṅ	like the n in "sing"

PALATAL CONSONANTS

Sounded at the roof of the mouth.

च्	ch	(c in mantras) like the ch in "church" (with less air than is usually spoken in English)
छ्	ṣh	(ch in mantras) like the ch in "chain" (using more breath than the last example)
ज्	j	like the j in "jump"
झ्	jh	like the geh in "hedgehog" or like the j in "jump" (using more breath than the last example)
ञ्	ñ	like the n in "cinch"

CEREBRAL CONSONANTS

Pronounced with the tongue touching the roof of the mouth behind the teeth. These are also known as retroflex.

ट्	ṭ	like the t of "start"
ठ्	ṭh	like the t of "tart" or the th of "anthill"
ड्	ḍ	like the d of "dart"
ढ्	ḍh	like the dh of "madhouse"
ण्	ṇ	like the n in "tint"

DENTAL CONSONANTS

Sounded with the tip of the tongue at the back of the upper front teeth.

त्	t	like the t of "start"
थ्	th	like the t of "tart" or the th of "anthill"
द्	d	like the d of "dart"
ध्	dh	like the dh of "madhouse"
न्	n	like the n in "tint"

LABIAL CONSONANTS

Sounded at the lips.

प्	p	like the p in "spin"
फ्	ph	like the p in "pin or path"
ब्	b	like the b in "bin"
भ्	bh	like the bh in "labhouse"
म्	m	like the m in "mumps"

SEMIVOWELS

य्	y	(palatal)like the y in "yellow"
र्	r	(cerebral) similar to the r in "drama" but ideally with a slight roll
ल्	l	(dental) like the l in "lug" or "law"
व्	v	(labial)between the v of "vile" and w of "wile"

SIBILANTS

श्	ś	(palatal) similar to the sh in "sheep" or "shine"
ष्	sh	(cerebral) (ṣ in mantras) similar to the c in "efficient" or the sh in "shut"
स्	s	(dental) like the s in "so" or "saint"

ASPIRANT

ह	h	like the h in "hero" (more breathy than the normal English "h")

ANUSVĀRA e.g, कं kaṁ

Represents the nasal of the type of letter it precedes; e.g.: अंग = *aṅga.* Transliterated as ṁ, or the actual nasal, e.g., ñ. At the end of words it is often म् *(m).*

AYOGAVAHA ꣠, गꣳ

An accentuated Vedic form of *anusvāra* preceding र ष श स ह. It is transliterated as gṁ.

VISĀRGA (ः) ḥ

Pronounced like *huh* (with a short, stopping sound), or *hih,* after i, ī and e.

AVAGRAHA ऽ ’

Written in transliteration as an apostrophe, the avagraha optionally marks the loss of an "a" in the pronunciation of a word due to sandhi. It plays no role in pronunciation (and hence is often not used), but serves to tell us that the second of two joining words originally began with a short "a" (in the case of one avagraha) or a long ā (in the case of two avagrahas).

DAṆḌA

। marks end of sentence.
॥ marks end of stanza.

SPECIAL CHARACTERS

ज्ञ (ज + ञ) jñ …a nasalized sound, like *gya* or *jya.*
क्ष (क + ष) ksh (kṣ in mantras)

CONVENTIONS

1. In summary, IAST transliteration is followed in mantras (with dot above m for anusvara, rather than below). Other text in the book follows the following exceptions:
च् = c, छ = ç, च्च् = cch
ष् = sh, ऋ = ṛi,
2. Geographical and person names, e.g., *Himalaya,* are generally given without diacriticals.
Unt, seque sit dolorrum ullatur? Exerepr epudicatum quassitPa

அருள்மிகு முருகனதிருக் கோவில் ஆறாவது படைவீடு
ஔவைக்குசுட்டபழம்வேண்டுமா?
சுடாதபழம்வேண்டுமா என்றுகேட்டுகாட்சி
கொடுத்தநாவல்மரம்

Conclusion

Nirvāhaṇam

निर्वाहणम्

Now we have told Gaṇeśa's story and have been rewarded with the kindly responses of eminent, scholarly swāmīs, satgurus and co-religionists who sent so many generous contributions and remarks which helped make it 99 percent perfect. We know it could be one percent better, but rest in the feeling that we did our humble best. Praying to our loving Gaṇeśa is a must for each Hindu and ardha-Hindu to be able to succeed and then sustain their enterprises. For this beloved God looks far into the future and expects family wealth not to be a temporary prosperity for one generation or two, but a sustainable fortune for many more generations into the future of futures. So a prayer now and again is worth the praying. The wealth of knowledge is immense about this principal bearer of Hinduism, the pope of it all (the God whom even Rudra-Brahmā-Vishṇu Himself acknowledged and gave a place of honor). We presumed no hope to capture all His glorious subtleties within these few pages—just enough to know how to proceed in His worship, receive His love and commence well-thought-out plans with His grace. This mystic God knows no bounds. He is the channel to all the 330 million Gods and the Supreme God of the *Vedas*. To be sure, Gaṇeśa is boundless and as universal as gravity, responding to our every need just a little faster than the speed of light. Believe it. It's true. We affectionately conclude *Loving Gaṇeśa,* remembering Him as the patron of culture, protector of travelers, the door opener and the guardian of destiny, guiding Dharma's future.

Supplementary Studies

Granthavidyā

ग्रन्थविद्या

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INTERNET RESOURCES

www.himalayanacademy.com/resources/ Himalayan Academy Publications, modern Hindu texts by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami and other authors, as well as many other resources.

www.himalayanacademy.com/academy/ Himalayan Academy's home page, including information about studying with Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami.

www.positivediscipline.com/ Positive Discipline is the modern Adlerian philosophy of child-raising put forth by Dr. Jane Nelsen, in which parents and teachers are encouraged to adopt the attitude that all people, including children, deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. This course teaches love, kindness and firmness as methods with which to teach children and gives encouragement and direction to parents who are accustomed to extremely strict, permissive or abusive methods of child discipline.

Colophon

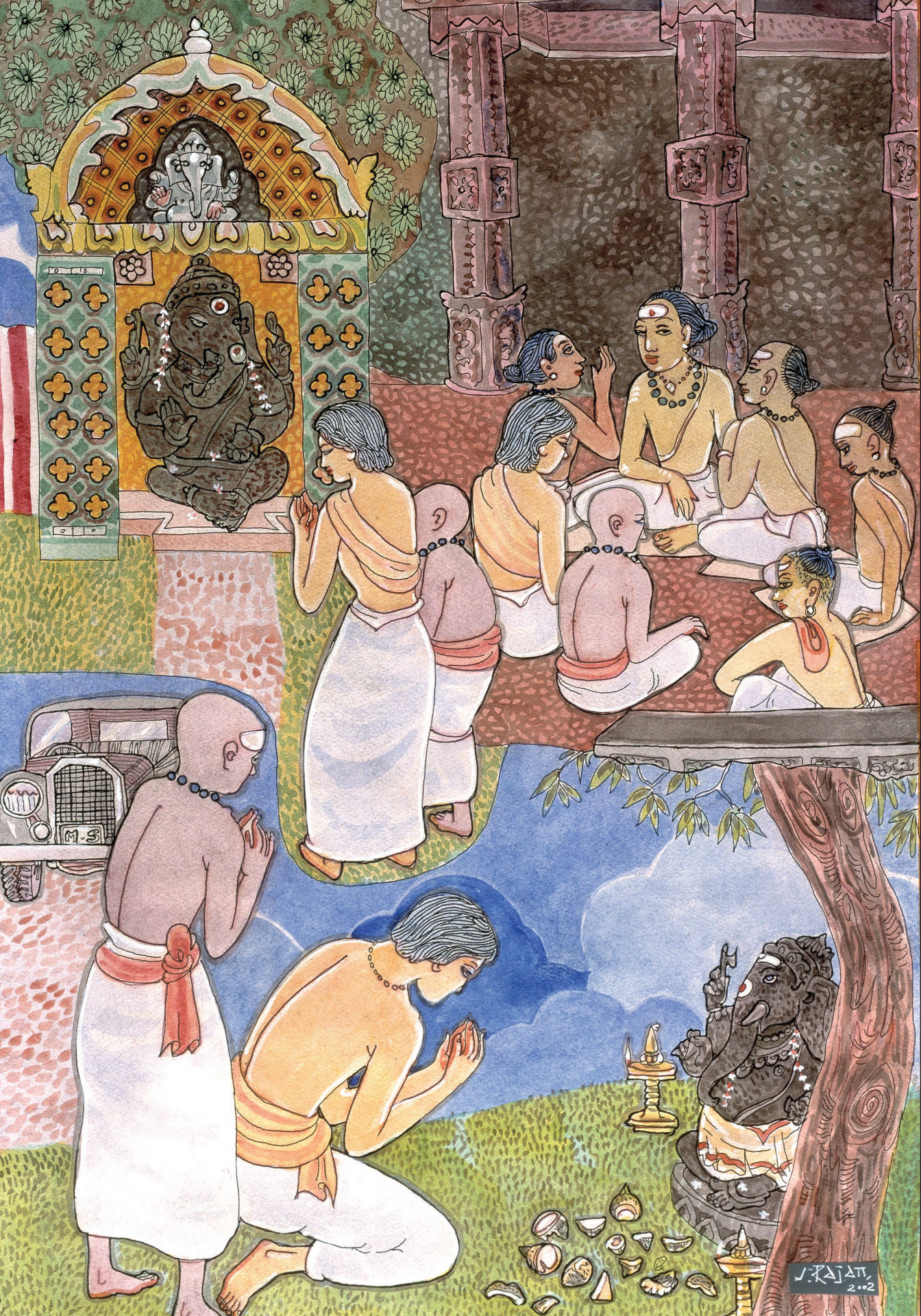
Antyavachanam

अन्त्यवचनम्

Loving Gaṇeśa: Hinduism's Endearing Elephant-Faced God was designed and illustrated by the swāmīs of the Śaiva Siddhānta Yoga Order at Kauai's Hindu Monastery on the Garden Island in Hawaii. This third edition of *Loving Gaṇeśa* was edited using InDesign. Original input and author's editing were created years ago on an ethernet-based series of Macintosh PowerBooks using Farallon's Timbuktu in a Winnebago field office.

The cover art is a watercolor by Tiru S. Rajam of Chennai, India, commissioned for this book in 1997. The Deity paintings on the title page and after the introduction are by the same artist, who was a venerable national treasure of South India, musical composer and traditional Tamil Śaivite artist whose work is permanently exhibited in the British Museum in London. The vivid oil portrait of Gurudeva on the back cover was a gift from India's renowned artist and national treasure, Sri Indra Sharma, during his sojourn on Kauai in late 1997. He was also commissioned to execute the portrait of Jnanaguru Yogaswami on page 4, a likeness described to be "just like he looked," according to Srila Sri Sivaratnapuri Tiruchiswamigal of Bangalore, who knew him well. Many of the illustrations are by Tiru M. Arumugam of Chennai, India, commissioned for the second edition in 1999.

The cover design and Himalayan Academy logo were created by San Francisco artist John Kuzich. Sanskṛit proofreading and guidance for the first edition was studiously provided by: Pandit Satya Pal Sharma, founder of the Vedic University of America in San Diego; Vyaas Houston, founder of the American Sanskṛit Institute; Dr. P. Jayaraman, Executive Director of Bharatīya Vidya Bhavan, Woodside, New York; Pandit and Jyotisha Sastri Laxmishanker Trivedi and his son Devendra of Fremont, California; and Professor Jayaram Sethuraman at Florida State University in Tallahassee. Assistance was also given by Dr. Deendayal Khandelwal of the Hindu University of America in Orlando, Florida, and Sri Sri Bairavasundaram Sivacharya at the New England Hindu Temple. (Comprehensive proofreading was accomplished by Tirumati Sundari Peruman of Houston, Texas; Sri Krishna Mohan of Boise, Idaho; Tirumati Chamundi Sabanathan of Kauai, and the family members of our Śaiva Siddhānta Church Wailua Mission.


M.S
J.RAJATI
2002

We are most grateful for the extracts from *Tattvaloka*, a monthly religious journal edited by Sri T.R. Ramachandran and produced under the guidance of H.H. Jagadguru Sankaracharya of Sri Sarada Pitham, Karnataka, India. Sections on Praṇava Aum and the life and teachings of Auvaiyar Ma are from *Aum Gaṇeśa, the Peace of God*, a work of Ratna Ma Navaratnam, respected educationalist, author and close devotee of my satguru, Asan Yogaswami, whom we worked with in promoting the dharma in Sri Lanka for over 30 years. My dear friend Sadguru Sant Keshavadas kindly contributed "A Special Collection of Gaṇeśa Mantras" from his book *Lord Ganesha*. Sangaratna Dr. S.M. Ponniah of Malaysia, a renowned Hindu scholar and Śivabhakta, produced the chapter "In Praise of Pillaiyar," a collection of Tamil devotional poetry translated into English. For all this noble, talented and selfless assistance, we want to offer our heartfelt appreciation. May many blessings come to each one who contributed to this tome.

Exacting Sanskrit proofreading and guidance for this second, colorful edition was provided by Adaityananda Saraswati (Adam Welch) of Tampa, Florida. And thanks to Exoticindia.com for making available several of the paintings of Indian artist Kailash Raj.

In defining the practical and esoteric aspects of Hindu liturgy, as reflected here in the chapter "Home Liturgy," we were blessed with the insights of Sri Sambamurthi Sivacharya of the South India Archaka Sangam, who in the mid-'80s sent to Hawaii two expert priests, Kumaraswami Gurukal and Shanmuga Gurukal, to train my Śaiva swāmīs in the performance of Śaiva pūjā.

Calling forth the blessings of inner worlds, Dr. A. Anandanataraja Dikshitar and others of the ancient hereditary Dikshitar priesthood at Chidambaram Temple in South India (see photo on the following page) performed monthly pūjās blessing this work for many years. At Kauai Aadheenam's Kadavul Hindu Temple on the island of Kauai in the Hawaiian Islands, the world's most remote land mass, during the two years it took to create this edition my monks, maṭhavāsis, held (and continue to hold) successive three-hour vigils around the clock and performed pūjā every three hours, night and day, without fail.

Art at left: Artist S. Rajam depicts two encounters the young Gurudeva had with Lord Ganesha in Sri Lanka in 1949. Above, the American seeker worships in a small temple in Colombo, where he met Kandiah Chettiar. A council of elders met to allow the American devotee to come often to the temple. The lower panel illustrates the moment at Elephant Pass when Lord Ganesha greeted Gurudeva, welcoming him to enter the Jaffna Peninsula for the first time.

PHOTO BY SHASTHA, PHOTO FLASH

Going back even further in our history, deep thanks and appreciation go out to a wonderful soul, Kandiah Chettiar, who assisted in introducing me to the culture and holy people of Jaffna, Sri Lanka, and especially for taking me to meet my satguru, the venerable Sage Yogaswami. Indeed, Lord Gaṇeśa was there to bless our journey. On the way from Colombo to Jaffna, Chettiar, my guide and mentor appointed by Yogaswami stopped the car at the small roadside shrine in Murukandi. He explained that travelers who did not halt to worship here were not admitted safe passage to the psychically protected area of the carefully guarded northern Śaiva peninsula.

We got out of the car just as night was falling. We could hardly see the Deity but for the flames of camphor that the many pilgrims were burning. In the twilight could be heard the loud crack of coconuts being broken for safe

passage. I remember standing transfixed near that little Pillaiyar shrine, not far from our car. My sahasrāra chakra began to spin powerfully, and I inwardly observed a flame at the top of my head about three or four inches in height. It remained with me for a week or more. At that moment, I knew Gaṇeśa's grace and blessings for my travels now and in the future would always be with me. I was twenty-two at the time. Five decades later this has proven to be true. Little did we know, in that summer twilight in 1949, what doors that wise, elephant-faced Deity would open to us in the years ahead.

We conclude *Loving Gaṇeśa* with abundant thanks to all His devotees who participated so willingly in writing this biography of a universal God. All who enter the path to Self Realization do so through His grace and His alone. This has proven to be true through the many years of my life.

About the Author

Once in a while on this Earth there arises a soul who, by living his tradition rightly and wholly, perfects his path and becomes a light to the world. Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (1927-2001) was such a being, a shining example of awakening and wisdom, a leader recognized worldwide as one of Hinduism's foremost ministers. ¶In 1947, as a young man of 20, he journeyed to India and Sri Lanka and two years later was initiated into sannyāsa by the renowned siddha yogī and worshiper of Śiva, Jnanaguru Yogaswami of Sri Lanka, regarded as one of the 20th century's most remarkable mystics. For over five decades, Subramuniyaswami, affectionately known as Gurudeva, taught Hinduism to Hindus and seekers from all faiths. Known as one of the strictest gurus in the world, he was the 162nd successor of the Nandinātha Kailāsa lineage and founding satguru of Kauai Aadheenam, a 458-acre temple-monastery complex on Hawaii's Garden Island of Kauai. From this verdant Polynesian ashram on a river bank near the foot of an extinct volcano, his monastics, under the direction of his successor, Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, continue to live their cherished vision, following a contemplative and joyous existence, building a jewel-like white granite Śiva temple, meditating together in the hours before dawn, then working to promote the dharma together through Śaiva Siddhānta Church, Himālayan Academy and Hindu Heritage Endowment. ¶His Church nurtures its membership and local missions on five continents and serves, personally and through books and courses, the community of Hindus of all sects. Its mission is to protect, preserve and promote the Śaivite Hindu religion as expressed through three pillars: temples, satgurus and scripture. Its congregation is a disciplined, global fellowship of family initiates, monastics and students who are taught to follow the sādhana mārga, the path of yogic striving and personal transformation. The recognized hereditary guru of 2.5 million Sri Lankan Hindus, Gurudeva proclaimed his Church a Jaffna-Tamil-based organization which branched out from the Sri Subramuniya Ashram in Alaveddy to meet the needs of the growing Hindu diaspora of this century. It gently oversees some forty temples worldwide. ¶Hinduism Today is the influential, award-winning, international quarterly magazine founded by Gurudeva in 1979. It is a public service of his monastic order, created to strengthen all Hindu traditions by uplifting and informing followers of dharma everywhere. Gurudeva's numerous books present his unique and practical insights on Hindu metaphysics, mysticism, culture,

philosophy and yoga. His Śaivite Hindu Religion children's course is taught in many schools, preserving the teachings among thousands of youths. Hindu Heritage Endowment is the public service trust founded by Gurudeva in 1995. It seeks to establish and maintain permanent sources of income for Hindu institutions worldwide. ¶In 1986 he founded the Spiritual Park in Mauritius. That same year, New Delhi's World Religious Parliament named him one of five modern-day Jagadāchāryas, world teachers, for his international efforts in promoting a Hindu renaissance. Then in 1995, in Delhi, the Parliament bestowed on him the title of Dharmachakra for his remarkable publications. The Global Forum of Spiritual and Parliamentary Leaders for Human Survival chose Subramuniyaswami as a Hindu representative at its unique conferences. At Chicago's historic centenary Parliament of the World's Religions in September, 1993, Subramuniyaswami was elected one of three presidents to represent Hinduism at the Presidents' Assembly, a core group of 25 men and women voicing the needs of world faiths. In 1996 Gurudeva upgraded the newspaper HINDUISM TODAY to a magazine, a quantum leap that placed it on newsstands everywhere. From 1996 to 2001 Gurudeva was a key member of Vision Kauai 2020, a group of inspirers (including the Mayor and county council, business and education leaders) that met to fashion the island's future based on spiritual values. On August 25, 2000, Gurudeva received the prestigious United Nations U Thant Peace Award in New York (previously awarded to the Dalai Lama, Nelson Mandela, Mikhail Gorbachev, Pope John Paul and Mother Teresa), and he addressed 1,200 spiritual leaders gathered for the UN Millennium Peace Summit. ¶Learning on October 9, 2001, that he had advanced intestinal cancer, Gurudeva decided to follow the Indian yogic practice, called prāyopaveśa in Sanskrit scripture, to abstain from nourishment and take water only from that day on. In the first weeks of his fast, Gurudeva seamlessly transferred his duties and responsibilities to his chosen successor, Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, then 59, a disciple for 37 years. He left his body peacefully on the 32nd day of his self-declared fast, at 11:54 pm on November 12, 2001, surrounded by his twenty-three monastics. ¶If you ask people what was so special about Gurudeva, they may point to his incredible power to inspire others toward God, to change their lives, to be a light on their path toward God, a father and mother to all who drew near.

Visit Gurudeva's legacy on the web: www.gurudeva.org

There are a few unusual men who have had enough of worldliness and choose to dance, live and merge with Śiva as Hindu monks.

These rare souls follow the path of the traditional Hindu monastic, vowed to poverty, humility, obedience, purity and confidence. They pursue the disciplines of charyā, kriyā, yoga and jñāna that lead to Self Realization. Knowing God is their only goal in life, the power that drives them tirelessly on, they live with other maṭhavāsis like themselves in monasteries, apart from worldliness, to worship, meditate, serve and realize the truths of the *Vedas* and *Śaiva Āgamas.*

Guided by Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, successor to Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, and headquartered at Kauai Aadheenam in Hawaii, USA, on the beautiful Garden Island of Kauai, the Saiva Siddhanta Yoga Order is among the world's foremost traditional Śaivite Hindu monastic orders, accepting candidates from every nation on Earth. It is an advaitic Śaiva Siddhānta order, a living stream of the ancient Nandinātha Sampradāya, originally deriving from India, and in recent centuries based in Sri Lanka. Young men under the age of 25 considering the renunciate path who strongly believe they have found their spiritual calling in this lineage are encouraged to write to Bodhinatha, sharing their personal history, spiritual aspirations, thoughts and experiences. Holy orders of sannyāsa may be conferred on those who qualify after ten to twelve years of training. Write to:

Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami
Guru Mahāsannidhānam, Kauai Aadheenam
107 Kaholalele Road, Kapaa, Hawaii 96746-9304 USA
E-mail: bodhi@hindu.org; World Wide Web: www.gurudeva.org

> *Hail, O sannyāsin, love's embodiment! Does any power exist apart from love? Diffuse thyself throughout the happy world. Let painful māyā cease and never return. Day and night give praise unto the Lord. Pour forth a stream of songs to melt the very stones. Attain the sight where night is not, nor day. See Śiva everywhere and rest in bliss. Live without interest in worldly gain. Here, as thou hast ever been, remain.* SATGURU SIVA YOGASWAMI

The Hindu Heritage Endowment

Hindu thought and culture thread through almost every civilization on the planet, weaving a subtle tapestry of lofty philosophy and earthy, pragmatic wisdom. Whose life has not been touched? Some have been raised in India and enjoy memories of warm extended families and cool temples resounding with ancient mantras. Others find peace of mind in Hindu yoga practices. Many find solace in the concepts of karma, dharma and reincarnation, which express their own inner findings and beliefs. If you are one who has been touched by Hindu thought and culture, you may wish to further enrich your life by giving back to Sanātana Dharma in countries around the globe and helping preserve its rich heritage for future generations. ¶Hindu Heritage Endowment (HHE) provides such an opportunity. A public charitable trust recognized by the United States government, HHE was created to maintain permanent endowments for Hindu projects and institutions worldwide. Its endowments benefit orphanages, children's schools, āśramas and temples. They support priests and publish books, and they are designed to continue giving that financial support year after year, decade after decade, century after century. The staff at HHE is one-pointed in their dedication to seeing that qualified donations will be used effectively for the purposes intended. Each beneficiary must give a detailed yearly report on its income from HHE and a schedule of how the next year's funds will be spent before funds are issued. We take it as a sādhana to see that your gifts meet their purpose. Please place Hindu Heritage Endowment in your will, your year-end giving and/or your monthly budget. Whether you are inspired to give a few dollars to support orphanages or bequest millions in your will, write, give us a call or look us up on the Internet. Find out how to enrich your life by helping to preserve the treasures of a profound heritage for generations now living or as yet unborn.

Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami

Hindu Heritage Endowment, Kauai's Hindu Monastery,
107 Kaholalele Road, Kapaa, Hawaii, 96746-9304, USA. Phone: (800) 890-1008;
outside of the US: (808) 822-3012, ext. 224; fax: (808) 822-3152
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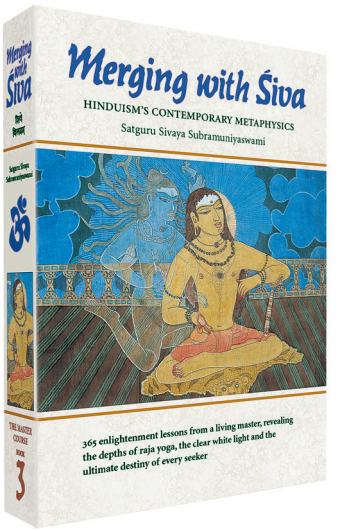
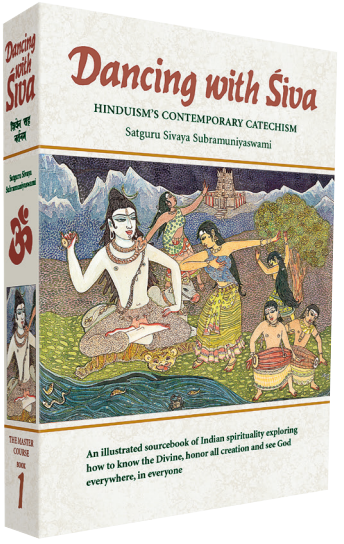
Merging with Śiva



Hinduism's Contemporary Metaphysics
Book Three of The Master Course Trilogy
By Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami

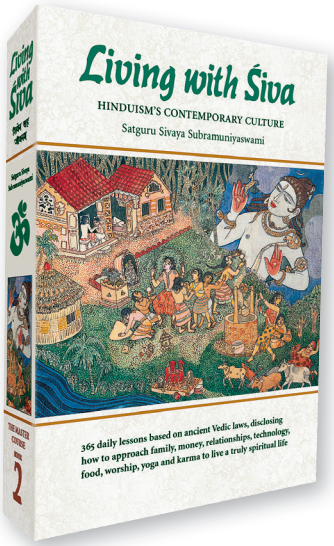
Here is the ultimate text for the serious seeker. It may well go down in history as the richest and most inspired statement of meditation and God Realization ever, in any language. Yet, it's user-friendly, easy to follow, sensible and nonacademic! *Merging with Śiva* is 365 daily lessons about the core of your own being. It's about God, about the mystical realm of the fourteen *chakras*, the human aura, *karma*, force fields, thought and the states of mind, the two paths, *samādhi* and so much more. Illustrated with fifty original South Indian paintings. Second edition, 2002, 1,000 pages, 7" x 10", case bound (ISBN 0-945497-99-7), US$59.95.



Dancing with Śiva

Hinduism's Contemporary Catechism,
Book One of The Master Course Trilogy
By Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami

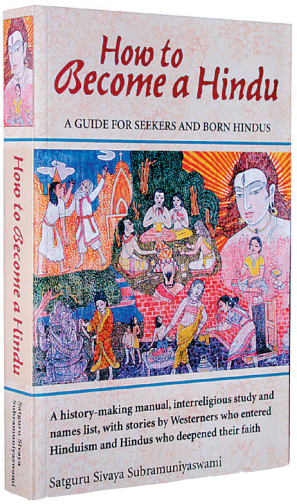
This remarkable 1,000-page sourcebook covers every subject, answers every question and quenches the thirst of the soul for knowledge of God and the Self. Clearly written and lavishly illustrated, expertly woven with 600 verses from the *Vedas, Āgamas* and other holy texts, 165 South Indian paintings, 40 original graphics, a 25-page timeline of India's history and a 100-plus-page lexicon of English, Sanskrit and Tamil. A spiritual gem and great value at twice the price. "The most comprehensive and sensitive introduction to the living spiritual tradition of Hinduism …a feast for the heart and the mind (Georg Feuerstein)." Sixth edition, 2001, 7" x 10", case bound (ISBN 0-945497-96-2) US$59.95.



Living with Śiva

Hinduism's Contemporary Culture
Book of The Master Course Trilogy
By Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami

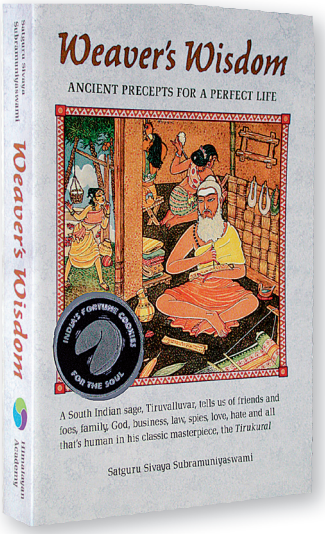
In the same bold, candid style of *Merging with Śiva,* Gurudeva focuses here on Hinduism's twenty restraints and observances that when dynamically applied bring order in life and establish a foundation for spirit uality, meditation and realization. He addresses frankly and offers sound advice on the various problematic areas of modern living. The book is conveniently structured in 365 daily lessons disclosing how to approach family, money, relationships, technology, food, worship, *yoga* and *karma* to live a truly spiritual life. Second edition, beautiful full color art throughout. Second edition, 2001, 7" x 10", case bound (ISBN 978-0-945497-98-1), US$59.95.



Better *How to Become a Hindu*

A Guide for Seekers and Born Hindus
By Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami

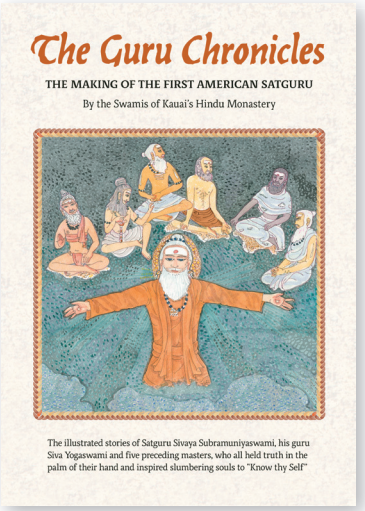
Hundreds of thousands of half-Hindus, having received a first name of a God or Goddess from their *yoga* teacher or a *swami*, want to enter the religion fully. Because of Hinduism's liberal doctrine, it is left to the individual as a "do-it-yourself conversion." *How to Become a Hindu* explains how the six steps of ethical conversion have enhanced the lives of many in the East and West. Here Americans, Canadians and Europeans tell their stories of passage from Western faiths to Hinduism. The book raises and convincingly settles the debate about non-Hindus entering the religion. "This elucidative book will provide immense help to those who wish to enter the Hindu fold, and also the younger generation of Hindus living outside India" (Puri Shankaracharya). First edition, 2000, 496 pages, 5½" x 8½, softcover (ISBN 0-945497-82-2), US$27.95.



Weaver's Wisdom

Ancient Precepts for a Perfect Life
Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami

A finely crafted American English translation of a beloved 2,200-year-old Tamil classic, *Tirukural*, by the weaver saint, Tiruvalluvar—yet, it's all about today's world, business, family, relationships, money, enemies, personal fears, gambling, politics, diet and health. Arguably the world's ultimate ethical guide, its pithy, often humorous, aphorisms offer an earthy assessment of human nature. In South India this scripture is sworn on in courts of law. Quote from it freely. Read from it to your children to train their minds and guide them along the path of *dharma*. Over 100 illustrations, 1,080 verses. First edition, 1999, 408 pages, 5½" x 8½", softcover (ISBN 0-945497-76-9), US$19.95. Hardcover version, US$29.85. Hardcover, full-color edition with English and modern Tamil translations, 600 pages (ISBN 81-7017-390-6), US$49.95.



The Guru Chronicles

By the Swamis of Kauai's Hindu Monastery

Here is an adventure into the rarely divulged world of spiritual masters, full of extraordinary stories, insights and spiritual encounters. At its heart is the untold life of Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, who founded HINDUISM TODAY, his guru Siva Yogaswami and five preceding masters of the spiritual lineage. Illustrated by the South Indian genius, S. Rajam. "Deeply captivating. The book has a musical magic, a beautifully lyrical story that happens at once in the past and the present, with the promise of an ever-deepening future of awakening for the reader. It brings so vibrantly to life the simple life and deep spiritual culture of India and Sri Lanka. S. Rajam's art adds to the musical quality, as his work is rhythmic and lyrical, too" (Gayatri Rajan, California). First edition, 2011, 832-pages, 7" x 10", hardcover, fully illustrated, $59.95, (ISBN 978-1-934145-39-5). Now also available in audio book form! Go to: himalayanacademy.com/tgc

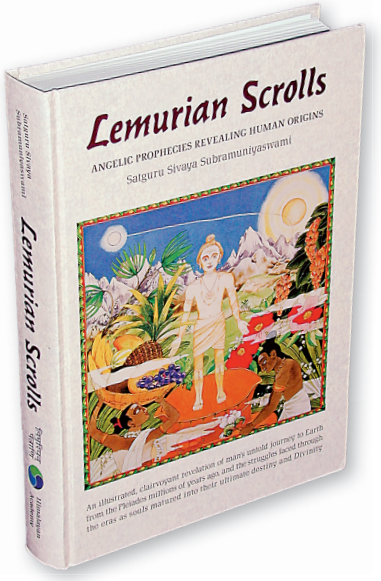
Hinduism Today

The International Magazine

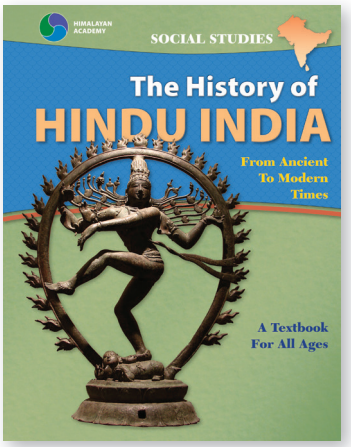
Enjoy a spiritual experience with the foremost international journal on Sanātana Dharma, published by Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami and the swamis of the Saiva Siddhanta Yoga Order. Breaking news, ancient wisdom, modern trends, world-class photos, family resources, humor—you will treasure every issue! "HINDUISM TODAY is a beautiful example of the positive possibility of the media being fulfilled, a bright ray of light in a darkened world" (Anne Shannon, Portland). Introductory offer (US only): one-year subscription, four stunning issues, for US$35! And yes, the author of this book founded this global magazine and guided it for 20 years. ISSN 0896-0801; UPC: 0-74470-12134-3. Visit: www.hinduismtoday.com

Lemurian Scrolls

Angelic Prophecies Revealing Human Origins
By Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami



Enliven your spiritual quest with this clairvoyant revelation of mankind's journey to Earth millions of years ago from the Pleiades and other planets to further the soul's unfoldment. Learn about the ensuing challenges and experiences faced in evolving from spiritual bodies of light into human form and the profound practices followed and awakenings achieved in ancient Lemuria. These angelic prophecies, read by Sivaya Subramuniyaswami from *ākāśic* records written two million years ago, will overwhelm you with a sense of your divine origin, purpose and destiny and motivate a profound rededication to your spiritual quest. An extraordinary metaphysical book which answers the great questions: Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going? Second Edition, 2006, 7" x 10", 400 pages, beautifully illustrated with original color paintings, hardcover (ISBN 0-945497-79-2), US$39.95.



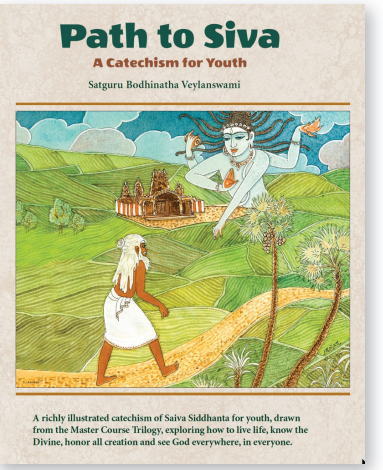
The History of Hindu India

From Ancient to Modern Times
By the Editors of Hinduism Today and Dr. Shiva Bajpai

In this book, we pick up the threads of Hindu practice evident in the Indus-Sarasvati civilization, which was the largest and in many ways the most advanced of the ancient civilizations. From there we trace Hinduism through the early empires of India, a time of great advances in science, architecture, art and literature. Then came the years of trial by invasion, followed by colonization and finally, in the 20th century, independence from the British Crown. Throughout these periods, we highlight the people, philosophical ideas and religious practices that are key to Hindu religion today. While the text is written for sixth grade social studies classes in US schools, it is also suitable for high school classes. It has even been used in college course work, due to its refreshingly accurate, terse but comprehensive presentation of the world's most ancient faith. First edition, 2011, 128 pages, 8½" x 10½", hardcover (ISBN 978-1-934145-38-8), US$25.00.

Path to Siva

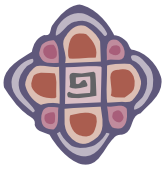
A Catechism for Youth
By Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami



Path to Siva presents all of the important teachings of the Saivite religion in 68 one page lessons. It is written with youth in mind, but is also ideal for anyone wanting a condensed version of Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami's 3,000-page Master Course. Here are answers to questions about God, Lord Ganesha, Lord Murugan and the devas—how they can help us in our lives and how to contact them through temple worship and home puja. You will find clear explanations of karma, dharma and reincarnation, and how to use japa, meditation and affirmations to make your life better. The lessons include insights on home life, getting along with others, religious tolerance, vegetarianism and caring for the environment. They cover challenging philosophical areas, such as death and dying, sin and evil. Discussing one lesson a week can keep the family conversation going for more than a year. First edition, 2018, 96 pages, 8¼" x 10½", hardcover (ISBN 978-1-934145-72-2), US$25.00.

Free Resource Materials

Today at Kauai Aadheenam, TAKA, is our monastery's daily chronicle of activities in words, pictures, sounds and videos. If you want to follow our temple progress, see who's visiting or just check in on what's happening, go to: www.gurudeva.org/taka/.



Browse through our audio library of over 800 talks given by Gurudeva and Bodhinatha. Listen to talks on family, personal transformation, yoga, spiritual practices, relationships and more. Go to: www.himalayanacademy.com/looklisten/talksindex. For our small video library, go to: www.youtube.com/user/kauaiaadheenam/videos.

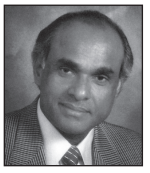
On our publication resource page, you will find Gurudeva's legacy of spiritual teachings, 3,000 pages of the Master Course Trilogy, three decades of our international magazine, children's courses, the *Vedas* and more. Go to: www.himalayanacademy.com/readlearn/books. All of our publications are available there, to read or download for free. The following might be of particular interest: *14 Questions People Ask About Hinduism, My Friend Lord Ganesha, Home Puja, Hatha Yoga, Four Facts, Nine Beliefs, Four Denominations, What Is Hinduism?, The History of Hindu India, Ten Tales (I & II), Growing Up Hindu, Life Skills for Hindu Teens, A Character Building Workbook.*

The following free e-mail resources are available at: www.himalayanacademy.com/email-news/.

- The Master Course Daily Lesson
- Inspiring Daily Verses from the *Vedas,* mankind's most ancient scripture
- Verses from the *Tirukural,* one of Hinduism's greatest ethical scriptures
- *Hindu Press International,* a daily news summary for journalists, educators, researchers, writers, religious leaders and interested Hindus worldwide
- Kauai's Hindu Monastery Monthly Newsletter
- Hindu Heritage Endowment News

Sri Sri Paramhans Swami Maheshwarananda, International Sri Deep Madhavananda Ashram Fellowship; Vienna, Austria

Reading *Loving Ganesha* I really felt raised to a heavenly sphere and was aware of the presence and brightness of this blissful, very lively Deity. In this book Satguru Subramuniyaswami proves his profound knowledge, his deep intuition and wisdom and his heartfelt devotion and love of Lord Ganesha, the Guardian of the Sanatana Dharma, the Remover of Obstacles, the Patron of Arts and Sciences, the Mediator and Intercessor between Man and God. He is the God on our side, our friend indeed, our protector and benefactor. In an excellent, clear and cultivated style, with simple words and a refreshing, subtle sense of humor the Great Ganesha is introduced to the reader. Each and every aspect, relation, symbol and meaning of Lord Ganesha has been explained and detailed skillfully, along with *mantras,* prayers and *pujas* to pay reverence to the merciful elephant-faced God. Many may think of Lord Ganesha as a little-over-weight, pompous, elephant-headed Deity Who belongs somehow to the Hindu pantheon, but with Whom he never really has gotten acquainted. If this has been your case, then *Loving Ganesha* has come to you in just the right time to get the right answers to all your questions and bring you closer to the magnificent and charming Ganapati, the Treasurer of all Knowledge and Great Ruler of the Universe. I express my heartiest thanks to Satguruji Subramuniyaswami for this wonderful book from which pours forth an abundance of divine nectar, wisdom and bliss. May all readers be bestowed with happiness, prosperity and the divine protection of the merciful, loving Ganesha!



YB Dato Seri S. Samy Vellu, President of Malaysian Indian Congress, Member of Parliament, Minister of Works; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

It is with a feeling of deep satisfaction and great joy that I read Gurudeva's new book entitled *Loving Ganesha.* Hindus around the world pray to Lord Ganesha for help and guidance. All Hindus regardless of their sectarian position seek His able assistance in all things they do, as their first Ishta Devata, the chosen God. In this book Gurudeva has brought forth a special interpretive insight, a powerful and persuasive presentation. It is a deeply felt, powerfully conceived and a beautifully explained work. I would strongly recommend this book to all students interested in Hinduism. It will occupy a significant place in the intellectual and spiritual life of Hindus for a long time to come.

Sri Sri Mata Amritanandamayi, President/Founder, Mata Amritanandamayi Trust; Kerala, India

Let this book be a source of inspiration for the devotees of Lord Ganesha, helping them to deepen their faith and love for him.

Pandit Satyapal Sharma, Sanskrit Scholar, Vice Chancellor, Vedic University of America; San Diego, California

Here is a marvelous book, full of attractive pictures, songs and poems, an enticing encyclopedia about Loving Ganesha written by the honorable *satguru* of Kauai Aadheenam, Hawaii, a heavenly place on earth and the unique Center of the Universe of Hinduism that is consistently trying to infuse new blood and spirit in children and adults of the society so that Hinduism can regain its past glory as the oldest and the richest religion in the world. His beautiful analysis of Sri Ganesha and His symbols, from a spiritual as well as scientific point of view, is incomparable. Sri Satguru has poured out his heart, and each and every word of the book is full of extreme love, not only for Ganesha but for every human being. He fearlessly repudiates all misconcepts that present Hinduism in a wrong form and removes all doubts with clear and convincing answers. It is actually his own experience flowing through the words, drenching the minds of devotees of Sri Ganesha with showers of happiness, peace and bliss. It is really "all in one" about Sri Ganesha. The author has explained His worship and chants, along with the meaning of *mantras.* He wishes from the depth of his heart for every Hindu who loves Ganesha to come up as a real Hindu in diet, costume, name and culture. He has beautifully explained the importance of Hindu names and given cultural cues and clues for becoming a real Hindu. Sri Satguru welcomes those who wish to change their hearts to become Hindu and has explained the way one can adopt Hindu Dharma. The Ganesha puzzles for small children have added beauty to the book. The soul of the book, however, is the three letters revealed by the Lord to Sri Gurudeva that have been reproduced

verbatim for the benefit of humanity. "I dismay as you retreat to the devilish worlds in the plane beyond My sight. I sit waiting for your return." What encouraging, inspiring and assuring words from Ganesha! The letters simply melt the heart and bring tears in eyes.

Tiru M. Arumugam, Chairman, Siva Thoŋndan Nilayam (Yogaswami Centre); London, U.K.

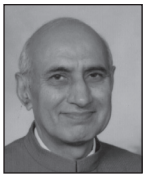
The Hindu, by understanding the philosophy and meaning of the forms, symbols and festivals of Ganesha explained in this book, so rich with pictorial illustrations, becomes more devout and attached to his religion and to Ganesha. Aspiring Hindus and the many non-Hindus in the Western world, increasingly becoming interested in vegetarianism, ahimsa, karma, rebirth and other concepts of Hindu religion, will find useful information and explanations to remove many misconceptions and misinformation about Hindu religion and Hindu worship. The large number of Hindus living in the Western world, cut off from their roots in India and Sri Lanka, will find the book inspiring to refresh their religion and make them proud of their rich culture. Many quotations from the Vedas, Bhagavad Gita, Mahabharata, Tirumantiram, Tirukural, Auvaiyar, Yogaswami and other scriptures make the book a religious and literary treatise worthy of study by scholars and savants. The glossary explains many words and phrases to help the understanding of the text. This book should find a place in every Hindu home and library.

Dr. Deendayal Khandelwal, Chairman, Board of Directors, Hindu University of America, Orlando, Florida

In putting this book together, Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami has done an outstanding and encyclopedic work, especially for the benefit of Westerners interested in Hindu thought and second-generation Indian Hindus growing up in the West. Several aspects of Ganesha that are not popularly known are included. These will tend to strengthen the faith of the readers in Lord Ganesha and make their prayers to Him come from deep within and hence be more fruitful. In addition to covering the various aspects of Ganesha, Swamiji has also included several other topics of common interest. These will prove very valuable to the readers in developing clarity about Hindu thought and in adopting more meaningful things in their daily lives.

Georg Feuerstein, Ph.D., author of *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Yoga* and *Wholeness and Transcendence;* Lower Lake, California

Millions of Hindus around the world invoke Ganesha, the divine Remover of Obstacles. Millions of Hindus should study this book and benefit from the esteemed author's knowledge, wisdom and human warmth. It is a wonderful cornucopia for those wishing to deepen their understanding of and strengthen their faith in Lord Ganesha. A high-quality, practical and very readable volume.



Sri Om Prakash Sharma, President, National Council of Hindu Temples; Wolverhampton, U.K.

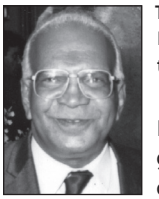
I have gone through Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami's new book, *Loving Ganesha,* and I find that it is very true to our scriptural heritage. It is well written and at the same time presents Hinduism in a simple way. A copy of Loving Ganesha should be placed in every library and Hindu home. In fact, I am going to recommend to the Council of Hindu Temples in the United Kingdom that they acquire this book in quantity and distribute it freely among the devotees.

Mrs. Patricia Monaco, MA, Reviewer for NAPRA ReView (New Age Publishing and Retailers Alliance), Orcas, Washington

The Satguru is that rare and precious teacher who is able to impart to his students the genuine passion he has for his subject. Simply and eloquently, he explains the devotion of the Hindu to Ganesha, the powerful and gentle elephant-headed God. Whether viewed as instructional or as an affectionate tribute, Loving Ganesha is the comprehensive source for those who seek knowledge—not just information—of this greatest of Hindu Deities.

Sri Sri Swami Pragyanand, Founder/ Patron, Sai Pragya Dham, Vishwa Mata Gayatri Trust, Delhi, India; Pragya Mission International; New Delhi, India

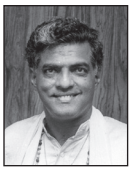
Loving Ganesha, by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, is a most monumental work on Lord Ganesha. It is so comprehensive as to not leave out any aspect or idea relating to Him. Illustrations of 32 forms of Ganesha depicting different postures and *bhavanas* make the book not only more attractive, but also useful, since each illustration gives the reader knowledge as to what form Lord Ganesha takes while performing various functions, and which form the reader should select to get a particular wish fulfilled and problem solved. In-between other pictures and illustrations, *japa mantras* make the book manifoldly useful—all in one, so handy, so magnetic, so magnificent and so full of utility. The analysis of Hinduism as the greatest religion in the world leaves no doubt in the reader's mind. It is factual, motivational and directional. There can be no more precise and exact description of Hinduism as to say "within Hinduism is a place for everyone." It encompasses the whole universe. Hindu Dharma, better called Sanatana Dharma, stands for perfect peace of mind, tolerance, nonviolence, mutuality, sacrifice and universal brotherhood. It emphasizes "Vasudhaiva Kutumbhakam"—"The whole universe is one family." God is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. Hindu *rishis* devoted their whole life to finding the truth about *atman* and Paramatman, soul and Gods, how to reach God after death. Hinduism is self-discipline and self-denial. It provides several ways to achieve the ultimate goal—*moksha,* salvation from *janma* and *mrityu,* birth and death, both being most painful. In a nutshell, after having gone through the book, I feel that Gurudeva Subramuniyaswami is not an ordinary writer, but is knowledgeable unparalled and is a rare saint among the galaxy of modern saints. I have known him for the last decade and a half. He is a dedicated and devoted Saiva who has promoted Saivism all over the globe. Lord Siva and Ganesha dwell in his heart, for he is the embodiment of Siva. Such a voluminous book can be written only by a person who has become one with Lord Ganesha, established direct communion with Him.



Tiru R. Rajathurai, Secretary of World Hindu Federation, Nepal, religious teacher and publisher; Singapore

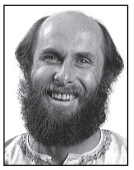
For more than thirty years Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami of Hawaii has been preoccupied with the religious education of his followers, particularly the youth. This is, in fact, the major concern of Hindu communities worldwide. It is not only the lack of knowledge of the Hindu religion that is disturbing but the apathy and liberalism that is being displayed by the Hindu youths of today. Unlike the Western youth, those in the East have had the advantage of being brought up in the age-old Hindu tradition and culture. Yet, many have succumbed to the Western way of life and lead a life that is foreign to their religion and culture. The Satguru, being aware of all this, has spent the major part of his life in the promotion of Hindu religion through the publication of suitable religious literature and textbooks to cater to the needs of all sections of Hindu society. He has also spent large amounts on the free distribution of pamphlets, books and pictures. I believe it is in the above context that the Satguru has toiled to bring out *Loving Ganesha.* Once I started reading it, I found it difficult to put aside. Besides the interesting text, there is Ganesha radiating His benevolence from most of the pages. It is a fantastic book that all Hindus should have in their homes for all family members to read. It is the result of much thought and research, covering not only all aspects of Ganesha but also other salient features on Hinduism. The "Author's Introduction" is unique, something one doesn't find in other books. The Satguru has given us insight into his own spiritual experience and has shown us the path to approach Ganesha and derive the maximum benefit. Another unique feature is the reproduction of three messages that Satguru states he received from Lord Ganesha. He has in his own words described them as "unique messages, couched in exquisite prose and profound philosophy." Besides, the book has covered a wide range of subjects that Hindus ought to know. Because of this, it would be widely sought by interested people all over the world. As a teacher, I have also been involved with education for more than thirty years. Besides teaching in regular schools I have passionately spent my weekends and holidays in teaching moral and religious education to the young and organizing religious seminars and conferences. I find that *Loving Ganesha* not only deals with Ganesha but also many

other aspects of Hinduism. *Loving Ganesha* is well written and contains gems of spiritual thought. Every aspirant on the spiritual path, as well as those who like to know more about Hinduism, should own this book. Reading it regularly and following the Satguru's precepts will certainly bring peace and harmony into one's life. Loving Ganesha and living with Ganesha will enlighten the soul and give one the peace and ecstasy that all seek.



Pandit Reepu Daman Persaud, Minister of Agriculture, Guyana; President, Guyana Hindu Dharmic Sabha; Georgetown, Guyana

Loving Ganesha captures the true spirit of Ganesha and proceeds to explain in both scientific and spiritual terms the esteemed pedestal He holds in Hindu homage. The pages on vegetarianism and ayurveda deserve commendation. I wish to congratulate Satguru Sivaya Subramuniaswami on this magnificent effort. This invaluable publication will be an asset to the Hindu world.



Vamadeva Shastri (Dr. David Frawley), Vedacharya; author *Ayurvedic Healing, The Astrology of the Seers, Gods, Sages and Kings;* Santa Fe, New Mexico

Hindus have often hidden their Deities so as not to offend people of other faiths or to appear modern. This has not only weakened them in their own faith, it has deprived the world, which is spiritually starved, of contact with these manifest powers of the Supreme Divinity, who offer a more intimate and personal connection with the Infinite. *Loving Ganesha*, perhaps more than any book, not only reverses but demolishes this trend. It confidently and brilliantly brings forth one of the greatest, and probably the dearest, of Hindu Divinities, Ganesha, the patron Deity of wisdom *(buddhi)* and accomplishment *(siddhi),* who dispenses the knowledge and skill necessary to achieve all our goals in life, including the ultimate spiritual goal of Self Realization. *Loving Ganesha* itself is like the love of Ganesha incarnate and the wisdom of Ganesha expressed. Through it Ganesha Himself speaks to the reader, not as a stern master or strange God, but as a loving friend. Like Ganesha, the book has the power to remove the obstacles in one's life and spiritual path and grant one the insight to go fearlessly forward in one's *dharma.* Lord Ganesha comes to life within these pages at a time when His descent is very much needed. Ganesha grants the ability to master all forms of knowledge and power. At this stage of global crisis, owing to the proliferation of undigested information and wrongly applied technology, He is the divine power most needed to lead us forward and take these forces to a higher level of manifestation. Ganesha, as the book clearly reveals, is the space-age God of Hinduism. His universal knowledge dwarfs any computer system. His universal power makes any technology seem petty. His universal play makes any great media entertainment appear dull and pointless. Yet *Loving Ganesha* is more than a book about Ganesha; it is a book about Hinduism, the Sanatana Dharma, or Eternal Religion of humanity, which is now stirring from its millennial slumber and arising to shake the world back to the proper spiritual path. The book contains in many ways the best introduction to Hinduism, particularly the section "How to Become a Hindu." With this book Sivaya Subramuniyaswami has made yet another great contribution to the modern literature of Hinduism, whose current renaissance owes a great deal to his untiring efforts.